

A NEW SERIAL STORY COMMENCES THIS WEEK.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"WILL YOU GRANT ME A FEW MOMENTS' PRIVATE CONVERSATION?" SAID MARK VAVASOUR, COLDLY.

MARK VAVASOUR'S TRIAL.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

It was a hot July day, and the sun shone in all his noon-tide splendour over the streets and lanes of Bath. The abbey rose dim and grey in a background of deep blue sky and fleecy clouds. The Pump-room was filled with elegantly-dressed girls and men; some reading, some chatting, some engaged in watching the folks passing to and from the Roman Baths. In Queen's-square the heat was almost intolerable, and the few children, who had been playing in the garden, had grown weary, and cast themselves on the grass close by the obelisk, or were resting on the benches placed in the shadows made by the weeping ashes.

At an open window, on the drawing-room floor of number eight, sat a young girl, her chin rest-

ing in her hollowed palm; her soft, dark eyes, in which there lurked a look of sorrow, watching half-unconsciously the gambols of two terrier puppies. For more than an hour she had sat there motionless and silent, with that same brooding expression on her beautiful face—that same pathetic droop curving her ripe red lips.

Now and again some passer-by would glance curiously up at her, and if it were a man the curiosity changed to admiration, of which she was all unconscious.

She was probably not more than twenty, and looked even younger. Her complexion was clear and pale, her eyes large, dark, lustrous, and shadowed by lashes black as the raven's wing. The dark hair low curled upon her temples, and was drawn down upon the fair throat in massive braids. She was simply and prettily dressed in some pale pink material, trimmed with cream lace, and wore no ornaments, save a little silver brooch in the shape of a Maltese cross.

As she sat dreaming in the noon-tide splendour there came a knock at her door. She half-turned

in her chair, and said, in a soft, clear voice, "Come in," and a neat servant-girl entered.

"If you please, Miss Conway, uncles would be glad if you'd step down and take dinner with her. She finds it lonely with Mr. George away."

Juliet Conway rose.

"It is very kind of Mrs. Addison, to remember me. Please say I am happy to accept her invite."

"Yes, miss; and dinner is served now," with which she made her exit.

Miss Conway walked to the mantel, and smoothed her hair before the mirror with her small, white hands, then went down to her landlady's apartments.

Mrs. Addison was the widow of a Baptist minister, who eked out her scanty income by letting lodgings. She had one son—George—who was presently to be ordained, and was a rigid follower of Calvin. Mrs. Addison herself was a pleasant, little woman, with a warm heart; very fond and proud, but also very much afraid of her

stern-faced son. She welcomed her lodger cordially as she entered the pretty, cool sitting-room.

"I'm so glad you've come, Miss Conway. It must be very lonely for you upstairs, and I'm sure it is conferring a great favour upon me. I like company, you see; it seems such nonsense to prepare a meal just for oneself."

"I was pleased to come, I assure you. I believe I am inclined to be melancholy to-day, and as I have no lessons to give I have ample leisure to indulge in the mood."

Mrs. Addison looked curiously, yet anxiously at her.

"I wish," she said, "you had some friend or relative with whom you could live. You are too young and lovely to be left so entirely to yourself."

The hot colour flamed into the girl's pale face.

"You flatter me," she said, a trifle coldly, "but pray believe I am quite capable of protecting myself."

"But this is such a censorious world, my dear, and your simplest actions are very often purposedly and vilely misconstrued."

Miss Conway raised her head, and looked Mrs. Addison very fully in the eyes.

"Have you any special motive for warning me thus?" she asked, and there was a sound of wounded pride in her young voice.

The lady hesitated, flushed nervously, trifled with her food, then said, abruptly, —

"Yes, my dear, I have; and as you are so young, and so lonely, I think it only motherly to show you wherein your danger lies. Don't be angry with me for speaking plainly; it is for your good."

Miss Conway bowed, and Mrs. Addison went on, —

"The people round here are talking very much about your acquaintance with Mr. Greville Dimsdale. They say you cannot expect he intends marrying you. Pray don't be offended with me; but try, dear, to remember the difference in your station and his. He is heir to a great fortune, and you —"

"I," interrupted the girl, "am only a poor music-teacher. Do my kind friends presume to say more than that?"

"I am afraid so. I know they wonder how and where you first met him. They doubt if you were ever properly introduced."

"I am obliged to them," Miss Conway said, resentfully. "Will you kindly inform all inquirers that I met Mr. Dimsdale at his own home? I was engaged to play at a *soirée* there. And should they require further information, pray refer them to me."

"My dear — my dear!" entreatingly, "Don't grow bitter about it, or I shall be sorry I spoke. Still, for your own sake, be careful. You know, my child, a good name once lost can never be regained; and don't let your heart go out to this gentleman, who probably is only amusing himself at your expense."

The girl's face had changed curiously. It was as if carved in stone, so set and proud was it.

"Mrs. Addison, is it my fault if Mr. Dimsdale meets and escorts me home? Shall I rudely decline his companionship? I tell you I am so lonely that I am glad to accept any kindness, any friendship. As for loving this man I should find it impossible to do so — I am perfectly indifferent to him."

"That being the case, my dear, I would forego his friendship. If your pupils' parents heard of it, it would probably injure you materially."

"I will remember what you have said, and endeavour to act upon your advice. I shall only be a little more lonely, a little more at enmity with the world."

"Surely, child, you have some friends or relatives who would be glad to receive you into their home! You would not be a burden to them. Your talent will always stand you in good stead."

Miss Conway flushed deeply.

"I do not know who my parents were, or if Conway is really my name. I tell you this in confidence. When four years old I was left at a seminary in Colchester by a man who claimed to

be my father. He paid the first year in advance, and for five years Miss Thorne, the principal, received payments regularly. Then they ceased, and from that day to this I have heard nothing of my supposed parent. Miss Thorne had grown to love me dearly, and so, instead of thrusting me into the world a pauper, she maintained and educated me, never grudging any labour, any expenditure for me. When I was seventeen she died, and it was discovered she left only sufficient to pay all just claims; so once more I was alone. I at once applied for, and obtained, a situation in a family at Rochester, where I remained for more than a year. Afterwards I came to Bath, and of my life since then you know as much as I could tell you."

The elder woman rose and kissed the speaker on her beautiful mouth.

"Poor child!" she said, tearfully, "poor child! You must try to believe that all your good days are to come. It may be you will discover your friends and so at last be happy. Your story sounds like a romance, and I should not be surprised to hear that you belong to the nobility! Your air is that of a princess. Why do you laugh, Miss Conway?"

"Because your words sound ironical. It may be I am the child of shame, and certainly I never expect to be claimed by anyone. It is extremely likely I was left to the mercy of strangers in the hope that eventually I should be lost."

"If you please, missus," said the maid's voice, "you're wanted."

"Who is it, Ann?"

"The parson, ma'am. I showed him into the parlour."

"Pray excuse me, Miss Conway. I am so sorry," began Mrs. Addison, but Miss Conway interrupted, —

"There is no need for ceremony between us; and I shall go into the park for an hour or two."

She went up to her room then, and stood a moment calmly contemplating her own face in an opposite mirror; then suddenly her composure broke down, and flinging her arms high above her head she cried, in the bitterness of her soul, "I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead!"

She sank into a heap upon the floor, and bowed her head between her hands.

"Oh! my love, my love!" she moaned, "why were you so cruelly false? Oh! can it be you never loved me at all? Why am I so weak a woman that I love you still, when I should hate you?"

She lifted her face then, and a grim smile curved her lips.

"Greville Dimsdale!" she said, scornfully. "No, my love is not for him. And yet, it would be good to know even he cared for me. I want rest and the protection a man alone can give."

She ceased, and sat with her hands tightly clasped, until the sound of a dreadful German band below aroused her from her stupor.

"This is fearful."

And she rose, smoothed the folds of her dress, brushed her hair, and putting on hat and gloves went out.

She passed down one side of the square, and up Queen's-parade, and from thence into the Royal Victoria Park.

It was not quite so thronged as usual, there being a fête at Sydney Gardens, and she walked on unnoticed and unnoticed until she had passed the first bed of scarlet and white geraniums, with its fringe of lobelia.

She crossed the grass, and selected a chair under a huge chestnut, almost facing the band-stand, and drawing a handy edition of *Hamlet* from her pocket began to read. But there was such a hum of voices, such constant passing and repassing of carriages, that she could not concentrate her attention on the play, and finally closed the book, and tried to take an interest in the scene around.

Once she turned her head and looked in the direction of the Royal- crescent, where the Dimsdales were then living, and thought dreamily if, after all, it would be well to foster the evident love Greville had for her.

Surely with wealth, and pleasure, and his protecting care she might be happy and forget the

past and the man whose face and voice haunted her day and night! But how could she tell that Greville Dimsdale wished to marry her?

He had often spoken in half-veiled words of love, but as yet he had not even hinted marriage; and her cheeks began to glow, her eyes to flash with strange fire.

She was very rudely aroused from her thoughts. A young man of the detestable species called master had long been intent upon her lovely face. At last he rose, and took a chair beside her; then leaning forward said, —

"We are both alone — let me — let me have the pleasure of your society."

The girl rose, all the hot, indignant blood flooding her face and throat. She gave one glance at him full of mingled rage and scorn, and turned to go. He caught her hand.

"Don't go, sweetheart."

And as he spoke a carriage rolled slowly by. Wreathing her fingers from his grasp, Julie moved swiftly from him; and lifting her eyes met the stern regard of Greville Dimsdale. His sister was with him, and as the girl's eyes looked from one face to the other they rested on that of the third occupant of the carriage. Involuntarily her hand shrank to her heart, and her face grew ashen in its pallor.

She did not return Dimsdale frigid recognition or notice his sister's look of scorn; she only saw that one face, those flashing eyes, and all the rest was forgotten.

As in a dream she paused, and watched them until she could see them no longer, then began slowly to retraces her steps.

Once more her persecutor was beside her.

"Why are you so coy?" he questioned with languid insolence.

The face that turned upon him was terrible in its rage and anguish.

"Why will you persist in following me?" she cried, through her clenched teeth. "Have a care that you do not drive me to madness."

The imbecile grin died from about his weak, sensual mouth, and something like shame stirred at his heart as he looked on this lovely, defenceless girl, who faced him like a tigress driven to bay.

He stammered an incoherent apology, and turned away.

One moment she stood watching him, the misery in her eyes deepening. Then she went swiftly homewards, and up to her own room, where she cried bitterly to one she called "Mark," imploring him to return, entreating he would think no evil of her, tormenting herself always with wondering what had brought him to Bath, and if Rana Dimsdale could be the attraction.

Meanwhile that young lady, leaning back amongst the cushions, spoke in clear, cold tones that vibrated through the summer air, and irritated her brother not a little.

"Why did you recognise that girl, Greville?" she questioned, laconically. "You saw how she was engaged; and now, perhaps, you will credit the rumours that have reached us of her flippancy and flirtation."

Greville Dimsdale frowned.

"I believe nothing but good of Miss Conway. The fellow was probably impertinent to her, and she seemed to be resenting his conduct."

"Because she had seen our approach," scornfully. "Mr. Vavasour, the girl has the misfortune to be as impudent as she is lovely. She is a charming phaeton, and I engaged her a short time since for a *soirée*. She quite fascinated papa and Greville, and through their influence she has obtained numberless engagements. But her prosperity will be shortlived unless she changes her bearing very considerably. It is very strange, too, that she should live alone."

"Miss Conway is an orphan, Rana."

"So far as we know," with an ill-disguised sneer. "Mr. Vavasour," turning to the young man with a bright smile, "you must not think me unjust or unnecessarily harsh. You must remember that no true woman can countenance vice or frivolity."

"Still, Miss Dimsdale, at the same time one should remember that appearances are often deceitful, and that charity is a good thing — in fact, the greatest of all the virtues."

The girl's long lashes drooped upon her flushed cheeks, as she said softly,—

"You have given me a grave rebuke, and I thank you," but she dared not lift her eyes lest Mark Vavasour should see the anger in them.

No more was said upon the subject, and the remainder of the drive apparently was pleasant to all.

When they returned to Royal Crescent there was scarcely time to dress for dinner, and yet Mark lingered on his way to the dining-room, his face hard and stern, his eyes full of angry scorn.

"After all," he muttered, "it was well. Juliet Conway would have been no fit wife for me—she would have wrecked my happiness, and perhaps dishonoured my name. It will be wiser to marry a woman in my own station, Rana Dimsdale, for instance. She is pretty, fairly good-tempered, and, I think, partial to me. I will consider the matter. It is high time I settled down."

And he went down to laugh and jest with the assembled guests, whilst the girl he had loved, and still loved, to whom he had been cruel, knelt in her room with hidden face, and writhing form, sobbing out his name in every endearing term, and in her anguish there was no one to speak a comforting word, none to catch her close to kiss and soothe her.

She was alone, and her heart grew hard within her. As the twilight came on she rose and looked from the window. Fleecy golden and purple clouds were moving slowly along the deep blue sky, and the distant hills were violet through the evening mist. Far and wide stretched the lovely land, and the air was full of the breath of flowers.

The breeze murmured through the trees, and the sound of childish laughter came to her through the open window. She made a passionate gesture in protest against the loneliness and happiness around.

"I only I, am miserable!" she said, vehemently. "What was my parents' sin that it should be visited so heavily upon me?"

But the following day she went about her duties with proud, calm face, and inscrutable eyes; bore patiently the stupidity of her pupils, and prevented the patronage of the half-educated parents by her cold and dignified bearing.

She was not a general favourite, by any means; she was too proud, too reticent ever to be that, and there was an old experience in her life which had made her very bitter against all the world, and terribly distrustful.

Lately she had begun to notice a marked difference in the regard of her pupils' parents, and before Mrs. Addison gave her warning and advice, she knew full well what it meant.

She had overheard one over-dressed matron say to her favourite gossip: "I should send Amelia elsewhere to pursue her musical studies, only Miss Conway is cheaper and cleverer than anybody I know in the profession; still, if she is not more circumspect in her conduct—you understand!"

"Oh, perfectly! Then there is some truth in the reports I have heard?"

"Yes; why she is to be seen any evening in the park with Mr. Dimsdale."

Juliet had been too proud to give the lie to the words, or even to acknowledge she had overheard them, and perhaps her very silence had the effect of deepening her resentment. However that might be, she was daily growing harder and bitterer; more and more a scion of mankind.

She had felt grateful to Greville Dimsdale for his kindness, because it was a new thing in her experience to be treated with consideration; but now her heart was hot against him, because his very friendliness had made her name the subject of vulgar gossip.

So that morning, when returning to her lodgings, she saw him coming towards her from an opposite direction, she quickened her steps, hoping to escape him.

He was not blind to her motive, but neither was he to be thwarted, so he hastened after her, and easily overtook her.

She turned, flushed and angry, upon him, but waited for him to speak.

There was an ominous flash in his brown eyes as he looked.—

"Why did you try to avoid me, Miss Conway?"

"For a reason which I do not choose to give," she answered, coldly. "I have yet to learn that I am answerable to Mr. Dimsdale for my conduct."

She began to walk on, and he kept pace beside her.

"Has that most attractive specimen of manhood, with whom I saw you yesterday, superseded me in your friendship?"

"Do you not mean acquaintance? Pray pardon the correction."

Greville Dimsdale flushed darkly.

"I had hoped you had considered me in the light of a friend, and am consequently hurt to find I am nothing to you. Allow me to give you one little piece of advice—if you wish to be happy, do not trust your life to such a creature as you were favouring yesterday."

He lifted his hat and would have left her, but for once Juliet Conway's pride and reticence deserted her.

"Stay, Mr. Dimsdale, if you please; perhaps I spoke with unnecessary bitterness, but I have had much to trouble me lately."

As the first pleading notes of the sweet voice broke on his ear he halted, and the expression of his face wholly changed.

She went on hurriedly,—

"The man you saw beside me was seriously annoying me. I went to the park yesterday, hoping there to be quiet and unmolested, but that creature took a chair beside me, and endeavoured to engage me in conversation. As I rose to free myself from his persecutions you passed, and I knew, by the expression on your face and your sister's, that you thought me guilty of a vulgar flirtation with a perfect stranger, who had nothing to recommend him but his immaculate clothes."

The young man drew nearer to her. Had he been Mark Vavasour, he would probably have felt some lingering doubt of her truth; but being Greville Dimsdale, he implicitly believed her words, and held out his hand as a proof of his truth.

But Juliet refused to place hers in it, saying, with a bitter laugh, that they were in a public street, and open to observation.

There was such an alteration in her manner towards him, such constraint in her voice, and in every gesture, that I asked,—

"Has anyone been saying unpleasant things of our—our friendship? Your manner causes me to hazard this guess. Ah! I see by your face that it is true."

She did not deny that; but her lips quivered a moment, and a burning blush rose to her brow. They were close to St. Michael's Church, and the gate of the gloomy little burying-ground stood open.

"Come in here," Greville said, authoritatively. "We can talk better."

She obeyed without a word, and he closed the gate behind her.

One or two people from the busy street looked curiously after them, and then went their way.

There was a weeping-sob at the far end of the ground, and under it a seat to which Greville led her, and sitting down beside her remarked that they were now well-screened from view.

After that neither seemed in a hurry to begin any conversation, and Juliet listened in a dreamy way to the noise and bustle of the streets, the clattering of hoofs, the rumbling of wheels on the wooden roads, and felt in her shady corner that she was in the world but not of it.

She started when Greville at length addressed her, and her pale face appeared to grow paler under the flickering shadows of the leaves.

"Tell me what has happened since we last met!"

"I have been warned to avoid you," she answered, steadily and unflinchingly. "I have been told that nothing but ill could result to me from a friendship with you; the immense gulf between us has been pointed out to me—I should

have seen it unaided. My name is bandied from mouth to mouth by women who are wives and mothers, and yet have no pity on my loneliness. Mr. Dimsdale, as you are a gentleman, you will not attempt to meet me again. I cannot afford to tarnish my reputation—it is my only possession."

She ceased, and the young man had grown grave and pale. He loved her so well, he could not deny himself the daily sight of and speech with her; but he was not prepared to risk the loss of home and fortune without due consideration.

So he was silent awhile, striving to discover some way of meeting her that would compromise neither her nor himself. That was difficult to do, and he gave up the attempt with a sigh; then, with a burst of genuine feeling he caught her hand, saying,—

"I will try to obey you (although it is hard) so far as this. I will not waylay you any more; further I will not promise. If I meet you accidentally I cannot forego the happiness of speaking with you; and always remember, in your loneliest and darkest hours, that I am your friend."

Perhaps for a moment, as she drew her fingers from his clasp, she was disappointed he had not offered her his love; in her sense of utter desolation she was all too ready to seize any chance of happiness, however small and womanlike, she felt the need of a good man's protecting care.

"You are very kind," she said, slowly and drearily. "I was afraid I should vex you with my plain speech, but you have borne it very patiently. Now, if you please, I will go home—and alone, I must not be seen with you again."

"Juliet," the young man said, possessing her self once more of her hand. "Juliet," I cannot let you go—so miserable, so forlorn."

"I am Miss Conway to you!" she cried, with sudden fierceness. "Would you, too, take advantage of my defencelessness? Were I in your own rank you would not be guilty of such familiarity."

"I beg your pardon; but between friend and friend there should be no ceremony."

Her lip curved a trifle scornfully.

"I am learning to doubt all friendship—especially that of men. Now let me go;—good-morning."

"Let it be good-bye; who can tell when we shall stand together again?" he asked gloomily.

"Good-bye," she answered, so indifferently that she wounded him.

"Tell me," he urged, holding her hand still; "have you a lover?"

"That question savours of curiosity," smiling faintly; "but I will answer it—I have no lover. I never had."

"Thank Heaven for that! Juliet," but she was gone.

CHAPTER II.

MARK VAVASOUR walked through the Pump-room on his way to the Roman Baths, which had but recently been discovered. Some men he knew were lounging there, and one or two girls looked up from their novels to give him a smiling greeting; but he was not in the mood for conversation of any sort, and so went his way with indifference that was very galling to more than one prettily-dressed maiden.

As he neared the spiral staircase leading to the baths he confronted Rana Dimsdale, faultlessly dressed (if regarded from a Parlour standard). He felt annoyed, for he wished to be alone; but he had spent too much of his life in polite society not to be able to disguise that fact. Rana was flushed, and looked disturbed, but when she met his glance her grey eyes brightened, and she smiled as she joined him.

"Mr. Vavasour, I supposed you were in your room indulging in a siesta."

"And I believed you to be enjoying yourself in Greville's society."

Rana made a disdainful move, then with a slow and contemptuous gesture she said,—

"Go down and see how he is engaged. Mr. Vavasour, I am sadly disappointed in him. I

believed him to be above the vices and follies of the ordinary young man."

Mark Vavasour felt somewhat astounded by her implication, and very much inclined to enter the Pump-room. Why should he play the spy? and Greville Dimsdale was old enough to remember his own interests. But Rana took his arm and looked into his face entrancingly.

"Come with me," she said, softly; "help me to save my brother from a worthless woman's wife."

She looked so pretty, so pleading, that he could not refuse to obey her evident wish; so he descended the stairs with her, and passed by the bath-rooms, along the hot and narrow passage, and came at last to the newly-discovered Roman Baths.

The air was damp and earthy there. He looked up, and saw a few people in the street above, regarding Rana and himself with curious eyes; then he noticed an official, who was talking volubly to an elderly couple, and exhibiting a "Guide to the Baths."

He glanced into the green water, teeming with gold fish, under the dark arches, and at last his eyes turned to a little nook where chairs were placed, and he saw two figures that seemed familiar to him.

"Come," said Rana, "see and judge for yourself, if the girl he affects is a fitting companion for him; and pray remember always your opinion has great weight with my brother."

Mark smiled somewhat cynically.

"I don't set up for a teacher of morality," he answered, whilst his heart beat thick and fast, because as he drew nearer to Greville Dimsdale and the girl he was convinced she was none other than Juliet Conway.

At the sound of their steps Greville turned, and flushed darkly when he saw who was Rana's companion; then stooping over his companion he said a few words, which caused her to turn her white, proud face upon them with a curiously intent regard.

She seemed perfectly at ease, met Rana's eyes with clear and steady scrutiny, then she bowed slightly; but Miss Dimsdale refused to acknowledge her.

Embarrassed, and somewhat awkward in his embarrassment, Greville Dimsdale accosted Mark as he would have passed them.

"Stay, Vavasour; let me introduce you to my friend, Miss Conway."

Then those two, who had known each other in the seemingly far-away past, who perhaps had loved each other with the whole force of their individual natures, bowed and murmured commonplace words; whilst Greville, watching, read nothing of their story, and wondered a little at the disapproval in Mark's eyes.

Rana had moved to a short distance, and stood with frowning brow, looking into the green and stagnant water; when Vavasour rejoined her she turned to him quickly.

"Take me away from here," she said, with a flush of passion. "I am disgusted with everything; and I had counted on your support, instead of which you go over and ally yourself with the enemy."

"I should be glad to learn in what I have failed you, that I may rectify my error."

At his calmness of voice and manner Rana was conscious only of bitter rebellion, and the longing in her heart to win him to herself, made her unreasonably angry and jealous. Her great, grey eyes were bright with pain, and her tones were sharp as she answered,

"You know your fault; it was an insult to me to quit me for that woman; but a man will forgive a beautiful woman any fault."

"Do you grudge her her beauty?" he questioned, coldly; "seeing she has nothing else, I count her very poor."

They had left the Pump-room and now faced a pretty stone fountain covered with ivy. In an uninterested way Mark watched one or two passers-by lazily stay to sip the hot mineral water, and he was not a little startled when Rana said, vehemently,

"I wish I could stir you out of your calm; I wish I could make you suffer pain as others

suffer, so that you might fall to the common level and feel sympathy for common sufferings."

She was very white, and her eyes were almost black with the passion which for awhile seemed to consume her; she had halted on the kerb, and some acquaintances driving by glanced at each other and laughed significantly when she did not return their salutations.

"Too absorbed in Vavasour, and it's evident he won't rise to the bite," said one young man of sporting propensities.

Mark was keenly alive to all that passed, which alone was plain proof he did not love his pretty companion; he laid his hand upon her arm, and drew her across the road. Then he said,—

"You should not complain so bitterly of my stoicism, Miss Dimsdale; it is a man's only mask in the present day. Neither should you accuse me of being influenced by mere physical beauty. No woman, however lovely, could retain my regard unless she deserved her favours for me and me only."

"Surely you must have known such an one?" she questioned, flushing vividly; and for a moment met the grave, cold eyes with a passionate glance, and knew in that little space that he had read her heart, and vowed within herself to win him or to die.

Mark had long guessed her partiality to him, but he had not realized until then that he was dearer to her than any man, or any prize the world could give. He was shocked and, consequently, silent awhile; and so they wandered on mechanically, and as by mutual consent, passed Juliet's home and entered the park.

They sat down under a silver birch, and whilst Mark was struggling to forget her look and her tone, Rana had recovered her ordinary manner, and so was first to speak.

"Mr. Vavasour," she said, gently, "I am very foolish; advise me what to do for Greville. I cannot tamely see him fall a prey to an artful woman; remember, he is my brother, and I love him."

Her voice sank into almost a whisper at the last words, and Mark was not wholly untouched by her solicitude for his friend, but he answered, gravely,—

"You ask me a very difficult thing, Miss Dimsdale, and I should prefer having nothing to do with the matter. Still, your will is my law, and if I can help you I will; but first, are you perfectly sure you are judging Miss Conway justly? By her beauty and education she is Greville's equal. Would he be sacrificing himself by a marriage with her?"

"Yes, yes! she is not a good girl! she is no fit wife for him!"

She spoke quietly, but her heart was sore with dread lest Mark, too, should fall a victim to Juliet's beauty; and she could not guess how every word she spoke in dispraise of the girl steeled him against herself. Had he not loved her once, and if she had proved herself unworthy, could he wholly forget what she had been to him just two years ago? Now he said, stroking his moustache, meditatively,—

"If you have warned Greville of his folly, and disclosed to him what you know to Miss Conway's discredit, I think you can do no more. True, you could acquaint your father with these facts, but an informer's is not a very pleasant character to contemplate, and Greville has seen enough of the world to be on his guard."

Her long lashes rested on her flushed cheeks, her lips were tremulous.

"I might have known in what manner you would meet my appeal, Mr. Vavasour, but I was foolish enough to imagine you different to other men. I have only been absurdly mistaken."

"What is it you would have me say or do?" more sharply than she had ever heard him speak. "If your woman's wit," almost sneeringly, "can invent a plan by which Greville may be honourably saved from a *ménage à trois*, for Heaven's sake disclose it."

Rana shrank from him afraid and cruelly wounded, and when Mark saw that the better part of his nature was moved to pity.

"Forgive me, Miss Dimsdale. I spoke too

barbarly. But I, too, have my troubles and perplexities, and am afraid that they have made me (for the time) a most unsympathetic listener and ally."

"May I know your anxieties?" she questioned softly, and laid her small gloved hand upon his.

He looked down at her with a gentler expression. The sunlight gleamed in her eyes, and on her pretty, fair brown hair. Her face was flushed and tender, and he was tempted just a moment to say the words which would bind him irreversibly to her. Only there flashed before his mental vision a dark, pale face, with glorious, passionate eyes, which had surely once spoken love to him. He lifted Rana's hand with his own, and clasped it close.

"My trouble was the result of my own folly, I elect to bear it alone, but I am grateful to you for your sympathy, and glad of your friendship."

Her friendship! Was she not waiting to give him her love? "Oh, why was he so blind—so unwilling to accept what she would so gladly give? The dash slowly died from her face, the light from her eyes; but as she rose and shook out her dainty skirts, she said, almost tenderly,—

"Of my friendship you may always be certain—and my sympathy. Now, let us go home; the heat has fatigued me."

They walked slowly back, and when at last Rana found herself in her room, she slid to the floor in a passion of anguish.

"Love, oh, love!" she said in a weary tone, "when will you turn to me? When will you see how dear you are to me! How cruel you have made life to me! Other men pay court to me, other men admire me, but you—oh! you stand always aloof! Mark, Mark! am I not fair enough to win your heart? Alas! alas! if it is already given."

She started to her feet, and surveyed herself in an opposite pier-glass. She was undeniably pretty, and she was clever enough to be very fascinating; and yet—and yet he did not love her. The thought was intolerable. She sat down, resting her dimpled elbow upon a table, her chin dropped in her hollowed palm. She was very wretched, but she did not weep or groan; her heart was too hot and angry to allow of any such weakness. Suddenly she clenched the hand that hung by her side, and a deep crimson burned on cheek and brow.

"He shall love me," she muttered, in a harsh voice. "I will stay at nothing to win him for myself."

Then she rang for her maid, and began her toilet for the evening. When her hair had been coiled in heavy braids on the crown of her head, after the present absurd fashion, and she stood arrayed in a dress of some shimmering, pale blue material, the jewels on throat and wrists, she was fair enough to gladden any man's heart, and felt triumphantly that no guest of her father's that night would be as lovely as she. So she went down with smiling lips and bright eyes to play her part—to stake her all for Mark's love; and inwardly she said,—

"In the end I must win."

Whilst she laughed and talked, whilst she sang her prettiest, gayest song, the woman who was her rival sat lonely in her quiet and rapidly-darkening room—not weeping, not praying, scarcely moving, because the pain in heart was too great for any demonstration. So she sat torturing herself with thoughts of the past—maddening her brain with memories of "dead love, dead faith, dead hope."

With Juliet the three succeeding days were out slowly and heavily; her duties were many, her pleasures so few. She was so weary and so desolate that each night, when she laid down upon her bed, she prayed she might wake no more to the bright sunshine, and the world that seemed so fair to others and was so cruel to her. Each morning she awoke with the thought, "May this day be my last."

On the fourth she won a little respite from labour, and as she sat reading in the pleasant room she called her own Mrs. Addison entered.

"You're not engaged to-day, Miss Conway, and I thought, perhaps, you would like to accompany me to the *Floral Fête* at Sydney

Gardens. A friend has sent me two tickets. Will you go?"

"I shall be very glad. It is kind of you to remember me."

"Not at all. I like you so much I thought I would give you the refusal of the ticket. I could not have a pleasanter companion."

At two o'clock they started for the gardens, Mrs. Addison looking very comely in her black silk gown and silver grey bonnet, Juliet's leveller, if possible, than in her everyday attire.

She wore a white delaine with small sprays of crimson berries and bronze leaves worked upon it, with ribbons to match, and a great white hat, from under which her eyes gleamed like stars. She was young, and had a vast capacity for enjoyment; so that, despite her troubles, she could give herself up for a time to this unexpected pleasure.

They entered the gardens, to find them gay with gaudy company, sweet with the scent of multitudinous flowers, whilst, to add to the general enjoyment, a first-class band had been procured.

They made a tour of the tents, and then finding a seat under a weeping ash listened dreamily to Tosti's "For ever and for ever" until the pathos of the melody revived all Juliet's saddest memories, and she was fain to cry out for all.

"After all," she thought, "it was foolish to expect any pleasure, since, wherever I go, all things round me speak of Mark."

Then she flushed hotly as she saw Rana Dimsdale pass with two gentlemen, to whom she was evidently speaking of Juliet, and, to judge by her expression, and the insolent way in which the young men stared at her rival, Rana's remarks were disparaging ones. Miss Conway clenched her hands, and half hissed through her set teeth.

"That woman is my enemy. It will be well if she never needs mercy of me."

"My dear, my dear!" remonstrated Mrs. Addison, "you must not say or look such things. You positively frighten me."

Juliet laughed in an abashed way.

"It was foolish to openly express my thoughts," she said. "You will oblige me if you can forget them."

A voice beside her said,—

"Good-morning, Miss Conway. This is an unexpected meeting."

Her face, which had been flushed, grew ashen in its pallor; even her lips were white, but contrived to say quietly,—

"This gentleman is an old acquaintance, Mrs. Addison. Allow me to introduce you."

Mrs. Addison looked nervously from one to the other, and Juliet, impressed with a sudden sense of bitter irony, smiled at her confusion as she presented Mark Vavasour to her. At a little distance stood Rana, watching with ferocious eyes, and a face marred by hate and pain.

"I have something to say to you, Miss Conway. Will you grant me a few moments private conversation? I will not keep you long from your pleasure."

His eyes and his voice alike were coldly cruel. Just a moment Juliet hesitated, then she met Rana's glance.

"She loves him, too!" she thought, and the thought decided her. "Stay here until I return," she said to Mrs. Addison, and taking Mark's proffered arm passed with him through the crowds of brilliantly-dressed women and their attendants cavaliers, conscious that she had struck her enemy the first blow.

Again she almost laughed, felt even a dreary amusement in her own madness and foolish love, and when Vavasour addressed her she lifted her face with a carelessly defiant expression.

"I can't talk to you here," he said, half-sullenly. "Let us go to the Abbey."

"As you will," indifferently: "it is but a little way."

They passed out of the gates, and she immediately dropped his arm.

"There is no occasion to proceed in such an extremely Darby and Joan fashion," she said, in a curiously hard tone.

"I agree with you," he answered, biting his lips with anger.

They reached the Abbey. The doors were left wide open, and only a solitary verger hovered about. Mark led the way to the chancel, where they could be out of the verger's earshot. Juliet sank into a chair, and looked up from toying with her sunahad.

"Well," she asked, languidly, "why have you brought me here?"

He seemed to struggle for calmness for a moment, then he answered, "That I might speak to you for the last time."

"It was surely unnecessary to take me from my friend for such a purpose!"

"I think not, Miss Conway, and before you send me away let me tell you something of what you have done for me—of what you have made me suffer."

Something in his tone arrested her cold response. She had loved him once, she loved him now, and was willing to forget his past cruelty, and be to him what once she was, if only he desired it. Her softened eyes sought his with mute entreaty. He put out his hand as if he feared she would draw nearer.

"Don't look at me like that!" he said, hoarsely. "You make me forget what is due to myself. You almost teach me disbelief of facts which I have proved by the evidence of my own sense."

Again she was the cold, disdainful woman.

"Go on," she remarked haughtily. "I had expected something of this nature. I have seen many men since we parted that July night two years ago."

"It is unnecessary to tell me that, Miss Conway. You have fooled many a poor wretch since then with your beauty, your tender glances, your lowered tones and modest air. You have grown lovelier and outwardly more womanly in the last two years; but your loveliness is a curse to yourself and others."

She rose and faced him.

"Have a care," she whispered intensely. "I am less forbearing, less forgiving, since then. The wrong you did me—a helpless, friendless girl—is not forgotten. It rankles here—with one finger touching her bosom with a sort of pitiless self-scorn."

"I thank Heaven," he rejoined, "that I went away as I did; for not even my love could survive the facts with which I have become acquainted."

"Go on," she said, with terrible composure. "If you were a man you would pity me; do not pause to choose your words."

"I could scarcely believe the story they told me of you."

She interrupted him fiercely.—

"By the way I presume you mean Miss Dimsdale and others of her set. Well, it is all true."

At what he thought her shameless avowal of her frivolity he shrank back from her.

"I was a pauper, I lived by charity; I am ignorant of my very parentage; truly, all things considered, I am an undesirable acquaintance. I don't know the facts have leaked out. I scarcely care now"—and just a moment her voice faltered—"It is enough for me to know you are ashamed of all that has passed, that you desire to remain a stranger to me (as you have done for two years). Let it be so. It is best for us both. In time, perhaps, I shall reciprocate your hate as I do your scorn. Is there anything left you to say?"

His eyes were no longer cold. The fire of love shone in them, and his expression was one of keenest anguish. Juliet did not see that. Once more she had sunk into a chair, and beat her gaze persistently on the floor. Mark Vavasour sat down beside her, and spoke in a penetrating, but laboured voice.

"For my own sake I wish we had never met."

"It would have been better for both," she retorted, swiftly. "I hoped until the last few days that our paths lay wide apart. The world should be large enough for each to miss the other. I trusted I should never look on you, or converse with you again, because—because your presence hurts me. It recalls too vividly those months we spent at the Washingtons."

"Ah!" he said, with an indrawn sigh, "I

am inclined to believe you then possessed some remnant of your innocence and artlessness. I hope so for my own sake. It would be cruelly humiliating to know I loved so false a creature, as now I feel you are."

She reared her head high and met his miserable regard with flashing scorn.

"If I have erred—if I erred then—what was my fault to yours, Mark Vavasour? Who is the greater culprit, you or I? Ah! tell me that!"

She leaned so near that her warm breath fanned his cheek. She laughed as he shrank back. "You too, are changed," she said. "You are afraid to meet my glance, because you know how cruelly you wronged me. What if I had my secret, was your whole heart open to me! No, no, no! you were like the rest of men, soon weary of a creature so credulous as than I was."

"For Heaven's sake," Mark pleaded, "do not destroy all faith in me; do not try by any mean evasions and sentimental rant to cast the onus of this thing upon me. I loved you then. I would have married you. I desired nothing so much as to make you my wife; but now, seeing you as you are I cannot link my fate with yours."

"'Nobody asked you, sir,'" she said, quoted Juliet, with a flippancy of manner that her eyes and her face made ghastly and terrible.

Mark started up.

"There is nothing left for us but to say good-bye," he muttered, "but for your last speech perhaps I could have overlooked all. Men are invariably fools where women are concerned."

"Why air such a palpable fact?" she questioned, with languid insolence. "Are you waiting to take me back to Mrs. Addison? Pray do not think that necessary. I hate compulsory courtesy, and am used to walking alone. Ah! well, if you are going, good-bye."

He glanced twifly round; the verger had walked into the street, wondering a little what errand had brought those two together to the Abbey. Mark turned, caught her in his arms, and kissed her in speechless madness and anguish of soul.

She did not resent the caress; she seemed incapable then of anger, but she gently put him away, and standing a pace from him, said—

"Had you been true I had been a better woman. As it is you have made me what I am," her voice and her manner changed then. "For all my worldly wisdom, for all my bitterness of thought and feeling, I thank you. When you have time for reflection let these words of mine weigh upon you and disturb your peace. I loved you in the old days at Rochester. You were a hero to me; but since then—well, since then I have learned many things, and among them this—that he who taught me love, he whom I worshipped, was one of a very false majority. You can go now, and if Mrs. Addison meets you and asks for me, say I am coming, that I have stayed in the town to make a purchase. Do you hear me!—go! Oh! that I should hate as once I loved you!"

So he turned and went from her presence; and she, like a wounded thing, crept to the altar rails, and, kneeling, hid her face, but neither prayed nor wept, for she was far beyond prayer or tears then.

Lower and lower she sank upon the steps, shivering as if with cold. Her thoughts dwelt in the past, and her heart's whole cry was for Mark, the man she had met in such a bitter mood.

In her shame and humiliation she forgot all her surroundings, saw nothing, heard nothing, and she started with a low, wild cry, when a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a man's voice asked, gently,—

"Are you ill, or in trouble. Can I help you?"

She lifted her head from the altar rails, slowly and wearily, and met the pitying regard of a middle-aged clergyman. At first she could not speak, and he said, quickly and half-apologetically,—

"Pardon my apparent presumption, and believe if I can assist you I will. I have daughters who may one day need sympathy."

Slowly Juliet rose to her feet.

"You are kind," she murmured, with her hand pressed hard upon her heart. "You are very kind, but you cannot help me—no one can

Can you give me back old faith, old hope? can you make me a happy woman? I think I must be mad to speak thus to a stranger. Oh! why did you come here? Let me go, I cannot bear questioning, and even sympathy is hateful to me now."

He fell back and allowed her to pass.

The younger looked after her with curious eyes.

"A lover's quarrel," he said inwardly; "and she looks as if she meant suicide."

She went swiftly through the streets, unconscious that her beauty and her evident agitation made her the cynosure of all eyes, and at last reached Sydney Gardens, where she found Mrs. Addison in a state of anxiety, for she had seen Mark return alone.

"My dear," she said, deprecatingly, "have you acted with prudence?"

"Yes," swiftly; "that man was once my lover, he deceived me, and so to-day we thought it well to make our parting final. Say nothing about it."

CHAPTER III.

RANA DINSDALE'S heart was full of envy, hatred, and all uncharitable feelings, as she sat alone the day following the *Floral Fête*; it was humiliating enough to know that Juliet Conway was her superior in beauty and accomplishments, and worse than humiliating to feel that her brother had been bewitched by a woman who was socially so much his inferior. And now the crowning trouble had come; Mark had spent the greater part of his afternoon in her society, and returning to his party had been *distrustful*, and even *discourteous*. Was her wonderful beauty already working upon him?

"Oh!" cried Rana, in a tempest of tears, "she shall not win him from me. He is mine by my love; in time he must turn to me! Mark! oh, Mark! if only you know how my heart yearns towards you!"

A desperate resolve came to her to win him at any cost; she set her teeth and clenched her hands in her angry pain. The sultry colour flushed her face or left it pale; her great, grey eyes burned with inward fire. And as she was forming plans against her rival's happiness and honour, a sudden thought came to her. She was not a woman to let "the grass grow under her feet," so she turned the thought into action, and rising, went swiftly and softly to Greville's room. She knocked for admission, which she readily obtained, for the young man had become weary of his own society, Mark having gone out to a place called *Manotsfield*, to visit some friends.

"Greville," Rana said, with well-assumed diffidence, "I want to speak to you about Miss Conway."

The young man flushed.

"If you've come from the governor to plead with me against her you may as well spare yourself the trouble. I marry Juliet Conway or no other woman."

"I begin to admire your constancy, Greville, and to think there must be much good in her to win you so utterly to her. But by perfectly straight ways you can never win her; and so I have come to volunteer my advice and help."

The sunlight entered the room and surrounded the pretty figure, transformed her brown hair to sunny gold. She looked so childish, so innocent, as she stood with loosely-clasped hands, that the young man bent and kissed her.

"My dear," he said, "I am glad you have changed your opinion; sit down and let us talk together," and he placed a seat for her.

In her heart she laughed scornfully, but her face was placid, and Granville was easily deceived by her.

"Do you know?" she questions, with well-simulated concern, "that you have a rival in Mark Vavasour, and a very subtle one. To you he pretends not to admire or esteem Miss Conway, but it is otherwise. If you had not been engaged with the Swannells yesterday you would have seen him leave the grounds with Miss Conway. He was absent a long time."

"Stop, Rana; you can't mean this. Only the other day he warned me not to marry a woman

inferior to me in rank, and so impressed me with his arguments that I half forewore Juliet."

"You blind boy!" said Rana, caressing his hair with her jewelled fingers, "Mr. Vavasour doubtless laughed at your credulity."

"By Jove!" cried Greville, starting up; "if I thought he meant mischief I would—but I forgot, Rana, you are partial to him."

She laughed lightly.

"He is pleasant, handsome, and a good part. I suppose I must marry one day—why not Mark Vavasour?"

"Then it would not hurt you much if we quarrelled, eh? There are other men as eligible as he."

"You are very foolish, Greville. A rupture between you and your rival would put you in the wrong, and make him appear an ill-used and interesting man, so that Miss Conway would probably ignore you and leave to care for him. Let me show you a wiser mode of procedure. You know as well as I that there have been some reports recently not quite to Miss Conway's credit; I, myself, believed them once, but not now. By hints and innuendos one can do much, and remain undiscovered, too. My advice to you is, rest whilst others work; leave the management of this affair to me. So long as Juliet Conway can hold her own against the world, she will go on hoping one day to be Mr. Vavasour's wife, and entirely ignoring your prior claim. I saw that in her face yesterday. I am sure she feels towards him already as she does to none other. Let him once think her false and flippant, and he will give up all intercourse with her—you know how proud a man he is! Well, when we have effected this, when he turns from her, and folks show by coldness and averted looks that they think but lightly of her, you can step in and plead your own cause; she will be glad to listen then."

"And do you suppose," Greville demanded, angrily, "I should wish my wife's name to be the subject of common and scandalous talk?"

"You are very stupid," Rana said, impatiently; "the mere fact that you marry her will show to all that the reports were unfounded."

He hesitated a moment; then said,—

"I will rely upon your woman's wit," and was blind to the look of triumph in Rana's eyes.

"Now you are acting wisely; but you must go further. You must lead Mr. Vavasour to believe you are disgusted with Miss Conway's conduct, that much as you love her you would not marry her unless in a moment of madness. He will follow your lead readily."

"But suppose that Juliet discovered my share in this scheme?"

"She never will. You are as cowardly as a child. If you will only trust yourself to me all must go well; and being grateful she will learn to love you more than she now imagines the loves of Mr. Vavasour."

"But," urged the young man, "what will the governor say to such an alliance? We have forgotten him."

"I have not; but my pleading, united to Juliet Conway's beauty, will change his turn of thought. He will be proud of so lovely and accomplished a daughter-in-law. Do you agree to my proposals?"

He stretched out his hand and grasped his sister's.

"You're a splendid ally and schemer. What a pity you are not a man! Really, Rana, I did not expect such generous support from you."

"That is hardly complimentary. Well I'll go now and leave you to digest this matter at your leisure. *Au revoir!*" and she passed out of the room, a bright smile on her face.

Reaching her own, she leaned from the window, and indulged in a low rippling laugh.

"Poor Greville!" she whispered. "Poor fool to be so easily deceived!"

In her heart she despised him, but she meant to use him as her tool to forward her own ends, and what she deemed her happiness; and having attained these things she told herself, with a bitter smile,—

"Greville shall never marry that girl whilst I live. The fool, to dream of such a misfortune!"

The sunny days wore on, and the Dinsdales were leaving Bath for Ilfracombe, but not before Rana had sown her seed carefully and insidiously, so that Juliet already found a difference in the manner of her acquaintances and employers, and Rana went away with a comparatively light heart.

Mark travelled with them, and found Miss Dinsdale the most intelligent and appreciative companion. He never forgot that flush of love in her eyes, and was careful not to exceed the limits of courtesy; but she did not despair.

One day, when he and Greville sat together the latter opened his mind with all apparent candour, and gave Mark to understand that under no circumstances would he marry Juliet Conway, although, indeed, he loved her beyond life, and second only to honour.

"And, may I ask," questioned Mark, moodily, "what has brought this great change in you? A week or two since you awoke you would marry her despite all obstacles."

"Then I believed in her fully, but since I have had proofs of her frivolity and faithlessness; and my wife must be as Caesar's—without reproach."

Mark rose and leaned over the balcony.

"Poor girl!" he said, hoarsely, "it would have been better for her had she been born plain; she would have had fewer temptations. There are times when even I feel some doubt as to the truth of these rumours; when I am tempted to ask all may be as once it was—"

He broke off confusedly, but after a moment resumed,—

"You did not know—I would not confess—that once I was very near to marrying her."

Greville started.

"How far back was that?"

"Two years; but, as you know, we met here as strangers. If you would spend the remainder of your days in peace and honour give her up."

Greville moved to Mark's side.

"Do you care for her still?"

"Yes," with fierce self-contempt, "and at times I should be as weak as water in her hands—a fool, a slave, a dol! Drop the subject Dinsdale; it is unpleasant to me."

In October Mark left the Dinsdales without having proposed to Rana; but she did not despair, for he had promised to meet her, in the following December, at the house of a mutual friend. She was very anxious to return to Bath, and, once settled, she began to institute careful inquiries concerning Juliet.

To her great satisfaction she learned that the leaven of her malice was working well, that her rival's pupils had dwindled down until she was scarcely able to support herself, and seriously meditated leaving her comfortable lodgings for others less expensive; that she now obtained no engagements for *soirées* and parties.

Rana's heart throbbed triumphantly as she heard these things, and she longed to see if trouble had marred Julia's beauty, and so make her less desirable to the man who loved her. Her longing was speedily gratified, for driving one day through the park she saw a slender figure, not to be mistaken for any other, approaching her.

She bade the coachman drive more slowly that she might the better see the ravages, shame and pain had wrought on that lovely face. Juliet lifted her weary eyes, and met those cruelly bright grey ones, but she seemed scarcely to recognise their owner until she drew very near to the carriage.

Then a faint colour stole into the wasted cheeks, and she reared her head high. Rana leaned forward, and bent her fair, proud face upon the unfortunate girl; her red lips curved into a contemptuous smile, then she sank back among her cushions, luxuriating in her success. Juliet went on her way heavily, as if all things conspired to weary her; the hot, slow tears stung her heavy lids. She dashed them aside, hating herself for her weakness.

"It is she who has wrought me all this wrong and trouble," she thought, bitterly. "Oh! that she may suffer one day as now I do. Mark! Mark! had you been less weak! Oh!

surely my story should have moved you to pity, but never to scorn!"

When December came Juliet took her life in her hands, as it were, and faced her future with the calmness of despair. She had been reduced to many straits, had even parted with most of her simple ornaments that she might not incur any debts. She was woefully alone, and even Mrs. Addison seemed to fall her; she was overruled by her son, who sat in judgment on Juliet, and believed any and every malicious lie concerning her. Perhaps the embryo divisa did not forget her refection of his own suit, and was glad to revenge himself upon her for what he deemed a slight.

Mr. Dimdare had been ailing some time and Rana found it impossible to leave home: but she felt no regret, for Mark had accepted Greville's invite to spend his Christmas with them, and she was busy selecting new and pretty toilettes, charming morning robes, tasseaux, and dresses for evening wear, for now her fate was to be put to the test, and in her heart she vowed she would win Mark's love, or would die.

On a dreary afternoon Juliet Conway walked homewards, filled with vague misgivings; determined, too, to find employment elsewhere. She felt very bitter, very reckless; ripe for any folly, any madness. Reaching her lodgings she went slowly upstairs, and sat down, resting her chin upon her hand. A heavy step on the stairs roused her somewhat from her lethargy, and then a knock at her door followed.

In answer to her "come in" George Addison entered with a frown upon his brow, and a malignant triumph in his usually dull eyes. Juliet did not rise to meet him, she merely bowed, and motioned him to a seat.

There was that in her attitude so hopeless, so lonely, that another man's heart would have been touched to tenderest pity, but it was not so with George Addison.

At a glance he took in all her beauty, which not even her pallor or weariness her plain attire, could mar, and he felt an added bitterness against her.

"This is unexpected," she said slowly, as he crossed the room and confronted her, "pray be seated."

"No," he answered, grimly. "I prefer standing, my errand is an unpleasant one."

The girl smiled bitterly.

"Mr. Addison is so inextricably connected with the disagreeables of life that I feel no surprise. Please tell me at once what has procured me the honour of a visit from you? I regret that I cannot call it a pleasure."

His face grew pale with rage, as her lovely, defiant eyes met his, and the insolence of her tone vibrated through the otherwise silent room.

"Is it well to mock?" he began; "unhappy, sinful woman!"

She laughed, so softly, yet so bitterly, that his eloquence was nipped in the bud, and a most unrighteous anger stirred in his soul.

"Miss Conway," he said, "I have heard with grief of your frivolity, and I refuse to countenance it by allowing you longer to stay in my house."

Juliet rose suddenly; there was awful shame and agony on her face, and yet scorn was the dominant expression there. She lifted her head as she spoke,—

"Tell me what you mean, George Addison!"

"There is little need for that," abashed by her demeanour. "You have made yourself a byword in Bath, and I refuse to allow so honest a woman as my mother to give you shelter any longer!"

One moment Juliet seemed about to fall, but the next she stood erect.

"I wish," she said, hardly above a whisper, "that for an instant I could be a man! I would strike you down where you stand, you pitiful coward! I will go, but not until the time for which I hired these rooms has expired. If it hurts your immaculate and sinless soul to see me here day after day I am satisfied. You have heaped insult upon insult upon a defenceless girl; one day you will regret it. Leave me alone! Go from this room! It is yet mine; and do not

venture here again. Oh! you make me forget my sex! You tempt me to say words I would fain leave unsaid."

"Juliet Conway, you will bring trouble upon yourself by your own violence, and shame by your frivolity. As a minister, I warn you of what must be your fate if you continue—"

She interrupted him with a half shriek, and leapt to his side, her face changed and marr'd by outraged pride and womanly dignity.

She seized him by the wrists. He had not thought those small thin hands could be so strong.

"Be careful," she said, "you are goading me to madness; there is murder in my heart now. Oh! you poltroon! you wretched semblance of a man! a Christian! Go! If you enter this room again, on any pretence, so long as I remain here, you will regret it always."

Then she flung aside his hands, faced him a moment with flashing eyes, then pointed to the door.

"Do you hear?" she questioned, laughing; "go!"

And the discomfited young man went from the room in angry silence.

Juliet listened to his heavy step as he descended the stairs, and when she could no longer hear it, she sank on her knees beside the couch, and hid her face in its crimson depths.

"Oh!" she moaned, "they are all alike; in this world there is no room for me! Why cannot I die? Why was I born with such a fatal gift of beauty? If I had been a plain girl they would have let me go on my way unmoisted, unquestioned! Oh! that I had never seen the light of day! Heaven is very cruel to me!"

She remained kneeling a long time; then she rose. The room was very dark, and she rang for lights. The little maid answered her summons.

"Tell Mrs. Addison I wish to see her," said Juliet; or, stay, you can take her a note. I am scarcely in the mood to receive her courtly."

She scribbled a few lines, intimating that she wished to vacate her apartments in the course of ten days, and Mrs. Addison had best endeavour to secure a fresh lodger in her stead.

The latter tried very hard to convey her sympathy to the unhappy girl, but Juliet sternly repudiated her.

"You are being governed by your son, and will cast me out of the shelter of your home; consequently I consider your professed sympathy of little worth. Let me alone; I ask nothing of you."

And not all Mrs. Addison's tears could move her to a tenderer mood.

She resolved to leave Bath; she hated its streets and lanes, all its pleasant ways; and so sought to gain employment elsewhere.

She advertised, so far as her means would allow, and kept herself aloof from all, careless of praise or censure.

And so the last day of her stay at Mrs. Addison's came; and she had taken lodgings in a far humbler neighbourhood.

As she went slowly along Queen's-square she heard steps behind her, and a voice that spoke her name.

She turned abruptly.

"Mr. Dimdare," she said, swiftly, "why do you pursue me? Do you not know how sorely I have suffered because of my intimacy with you? My fair fame is injured, my occupation gone, my acquaintances have failed in their professions of attachment. There is nothing left me but to die or leave this hateful place. Do not persecute me further, for my patience and forgiveness have long been exhausted."

It was growing rapidly dark. The young man laid his hand in her arm and walked on beside her.

"Juliet," he said, "will you marry me? You know I have loved you long and truly."

"Do you mean this?" she questioned. "Have you forgotten the difference in our positions!—the cloud under which I live!—the contempt in which my name is held? Give me time for thought. I am amazed, almost frightened by your love and generosity."

Her heart beat fast. The temptation to take him at his word was very, very great. She was homeless, friendless, unloved by any save this man, who alone, of all she had known, trusted and clung to her. But the memory of Mark was with her, and after a pause she said,—

"Tell me, will Mr. Vavasour marry your sister?"

"Yes," he answered, lying easily; "they have been engaged some weeks."

The small, shabbily-gloved hand stole to her side and rested there. Then she said in a thin, weary voice,—

"It will be a suitable match," and well-nigh broke into weeping.

"You have not given me my answer," pleaded Greville.

She lifted her bowed head, and looked into his eager face.

"You don't know all, or you would not ask me to be your wife. I am a waif, a pariah, wholly unfit to share your lot. No, no; I cannot marry you. I shall never marry, but for the honour you have done me I thank you with all my heart. I understand how much you would have sacrificed had I said 'yes' to your entreaty; and in her passionate gratitude she lifted his hand and kissed it, not knowing how it had been raised against her happiness and fame.

"I will not accept your answer as final. Juliet, let me at least hope. Could you read my heart, could you guess ever so faintly what you are to me, your play would make you pause."

"The woman who hesitates is lost," she interrupted, swiftly. "Do not urge this upon me. If I said 'yes' you would one day wish I had answered otherwise. You love me now, or you would not have done me this honour, but love does not last"—half laughing, in her bitterness of soul—"at least a man's love does not."

They were in a quiet lane, there was no one to witness his passion or her pain, so he caught her in his arms and kissed her madly.

"Love lives for ever," he panted, "such love as I bear you. Juliet, you shall listen. Oh, my dearest! don't you know you have so grown into my life that you seem its very breath. I cannot do without you; and surely, seeing that you are so precious to me, you will relent. I can make you happy, and lift you to a higher level. My father may at first be disappointed, but he will not forbid our marriage. Rana will plead with him for us."

Then she laughed outright.

"Miss Dimdare posing as my mediator would be as novel as the idea is funny. She always hated me."

"She misjudged you once," Greville said quickly; "but she has long been your champion, and is eager to see us happy in each other's love."

"That she may secure Mr. Vavasour!" with great acumen. Then, understanding she had in her momentary madness revealed part of her secret, Juliet added, swiftly, "Why do you regard me so curiously? Are you surprised to find Mark Vavasour and I were no strangers when you introduced us? Once we were all but acknowledged lovers, but he grew weary of me as gentlemen will."

"Is it for his sake you refuse to listen to me?" Greville questioned, with suppressed fury.

"Perhaps so, who knows? We women are queer creatures."

"I give you one more chance, Juliet. Will you marry me?"

"No, I won't," she answered, sharply, for his tone stirred her to anger.

He flung her aside, so that she fell against the wall, and remained leaning there some minutes, sick and faint with pain.

"I—only I—am willing and able to repair your damaged fame, and make you an honest woman," Greville said, in furious tones. "Rather than see you another man's wife I would murder you, despite your beauty. Think what you are doing. There is probably no other man in my position who would be willing to marry you."

Juliet lifted herself erect, her face was white, her eyes flashed ominously.

"Mr. Dimdare, you have said enough to com-

since me I was right to reject your very generous offer. It is well I did so. It would be sad for me, indeed, to marry such a ruffian as you have proved yourself to be. Had you not best leave me now? Your attentions might be misconstrued, and it is not wise that so mere a youth should be exposed to the wiles of a woman who is not honest."

The bitter irony of her tone, the implacable scorn and hatred on her face, recalled him to himself.

"Forgive me; I was mad," he pleaded. But Juliet waved him away.

"There is no need to prolong our interview, and my most fervent wish is that I may never see you again. I shall never forgive you. You have insulted me too deeply either for forgetfulness or pardon."

She began to move on, and he followed. She flashed upon him.

"Must I beg protection of any passer-by? You would do well to let me go in peace. I am a desperate woman!"

He stood aside, and let her pass on her way alone; then returning to Royal-crescent cursed himself loudly for the arrogance and folly which had made Juliet his enemy.

"Rana would have managed better," he thought, and went to her to disclose all his woofing and its utter failure.

After that he saw no more of Juliet, although he often wandered through Queen's-square; and it came upon him with a great shock when Rana told him she had left Bath, having obtained employment as pianist in a theatrical company, at a very fair rate of remuneration. Still he swore that he would find her, and win her for his wife.

He was not a generous or good man in any sense, but he really loved Juliet with all the force of his selfish nature, and knew that no other woman would be to him what she was.

December passed, and Mark Vavasour spent his Christmas with the Dimdaises, and listened to many hints as to the frailty of Juliet Conway, and almost believed them; still he said no word of love to Rana, and she began to despair.

She was so gentle, so pretty in all her ways towards him, that he believed her the very embodiment of amiability, and sometimes resolved to make her his wife; but always his courage failed him, and he could not bring his resolution into action, because before his mental vision there would rise pleadingly, reproachfully, sometimes angrily, a pale, dark face, lit up with loveliest deep eyes, and he would hear the accents of a rich low voice saying, "Had you been true, I had been a better woman; as it is, you have made me what I am."

So January and February passed, and the Dimdaises went to town, Rana being still engaged. Once again Mark was thrown into her society, but he showed less and less inclination to win her for himself, and she grew desperate; her temper became less even, her prettiness was marred by continual discontent and depression, so that the worldly matrons said among themselves, with all her wealth Rana Dimdale would die an old maid.

Meanwhile Juliet Conway was rapidly growing popular in the musical and theatrical world; and Mark listened with growing wonder to accounts of her marvellous skill as a musician, and her coldness towards all her admirers. It seemed to him she wished to retrieve her past errors, and he muttered miserably,—

"Oh, that she had been less frail! Why cannot I forget her? And why must her parting words ring always in my ears? They had the sound of truth."

Then he determined to go and hear her performance, to look once more on the beauty which had been his doom (as then he thought), and as he listened and gazed the old love increased until its strength was a very torture to him.

"I could forget her mysterious antecedents, could afford to laugh even at her probably disgraceful birth, but I cannot forget her frivolity," and with that thought he went wearily out.

CHAPTER IV.

THE Princess Bronislava, most beautiful of Polish women, despite her forty years, sat listening indifferently to the sprightly words and music of a new opera. The house was full, the company good; but the lady's eyes wandered from face to face as if always seeking some friend whom she was destined never to find.

It so happened that, on this particular night, one of the actresses had fallen ill, and her small, unimportant part had been offered Juliet Conway.

As her first tones broke the silence (she did not appear until the third scene), the Princess started, and looked quickly towards the stage; then her whole manner changed. With a low, wild cry she fell forward, senseless.

For a time there was a great disturbance and confusion whilst her friends conveyed her from the theatre, then all was quiet again whilst the opera went on.

The Princess was whirled to her own home, and, having recovered consciousness, requested that the youngest of her friends, a pretty girl of twenty, should go to her in her boudoir.

"My dear," she said, feverishly, "tell me the name of the girl who began to sing when I fainted?"

"She was announced as Bertha Doneval," answered the girl.

The Princess sighed, averted her face, then said,—

"But it is a common custom with people of her profession to assume a name."

"Oh, yes! Why are you so anxious concerning her?"

"Her face is the face of my dead husband. Her voice had a ring in it like to his; for one wild moment I hoped, I dreamed she was my lost child. Audrey, I must see her, and speak with her; she must be brought to me tomorrow."

(Continued on page 329.)

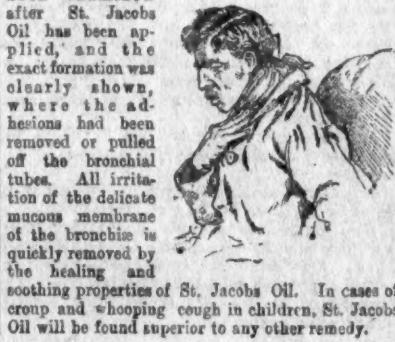
CHRONIC COUGH, BRONCHITIS, AND CROUP.

An outward application for bronchial difficulties is many times far more effective than syrups,

cough mixtures, cod liver oil, &c., simply because it penetrates through to the direct cause, which is, as a rule, an accumulation of matter or growth tightly adhered to the bronchial tubes.

St. Jacobs Oil, possessing as it does those

wonderful penetrating powers, enables it to loosen those adhesions and to induce free expectoration. I have known cases where expectorations have been examined after St. Jacobs Oil has been applied, and the exact formation was clearly shown, where the adhesions had been removed or pulled off the bronchial tubes. All irritation of the delicate mucous membrane of the bronchie is quickly removed by the healing and soothing properties of St. Jacobs Oil. In cases of croup and whooping cough in children, St. Jacobs Oil will be found superior to any other remedy.



THE GARDNER'S DAUGHTER.

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CHAPTER I.

About six miles from one of the most fashionable towns in the West of England there stands a large, straggling old house known by the name of Daneford Place—or called for short by the people in the neighbourhood, simply "The Place"—being the most imposing structure of the kind within a very considerable radius.

It is situated in a hollow, with the ground sloping towards it on all sides, but especially from the back, where a steep hill, covered with woods, towers high above it, and shelters it thoroughly from the north wind.

"The Place" consists of a square centre block, with imposing porches and two long wings; its colour is pale buff, streaked with many marks of its weather. The windows are all tightly shuttered up, and the avenues, which meet before the granite steps, are plentifully covered with moss and grass. Altogether, the house and its surroundings have a forlorn and desolate look. And no wonder, seeing that it is fully fifteen years since smoke has ascended from those flat stacks of chimneys, since the windows were opened, and since the blistered, paintless hall door stood wide—and then it was to give egress to a corpse.

Since the death of Mr. Darvall "The Place" has been deserted. Attempts to let it have been vain. It was much too large; besides, it has a bad name. Ill deeds done under its roof have taken away its once honourable character, and many people would not cross the park after dark for a hundred pounds (for both the park and "The Place" are said to be haunted).

The lodges are occupied by caretakers, who see that the house does not absolutely fall to pieces; and in the west and most important entrance dwells a gardener, who leases the gardens and greenhouses at so much per annum, and was the head gardener at "The Place" in the days of old Mr. Darvall.

The lodge he lives in is of a castellated shape, double storied, and covered with ivy; a trim little garden of roses and geraniums is enclosed in front of it by a green wire fence; boxes of flowers adorn each window-sill.

The master's trade may be easily guessed from the outside of the house, but the fairest flower he possesses is his only child, his daughter, Mary Meadows.

She is seventeen years of age, tall and slim, and not merely pretty, with the blue eyes, ruddy cheeks, and wavy locks of a country maiden. She had an air of such distinction about the carriage of her head, such delicate modelling of face and features, that she promises to be a beauty of a type that is seldom seen among girls of her class in life.

In no way does she resemble her mother—with her turn-up nose and sharp, little brown eyes—still less is she like the worthy gardener, with his thick, homely features, and reddish grizzled hair. She resembles no one but herself.

The truth may as well be stated here at once. She is not their child! so why should she be like them? They never had but one of their own—a puny little infant that was carried off by croup just seventeen years previously.

Mrs. Meadows and John were inconsolable. They had married late in life; for several years they had been childless, and now the long wished-for infant, who was to have been the prop of their old age, had been suddenly taken from them.

A week after its death, whilst Mrs. Meadows was still bemoaning her hard fate, her husband came home one evening with a small bundle in his arms, and laying it in her lap said, triumphantly,—

"See here, Jessie, what I have brought you!" "What is it?" she inquired, in a melancholy tone.

"I believe it's nothing less than a baby! I found it in the orchid-house, close by the stove, when I was going round; someone must have put it there within the last half hour. I came

ous and I looked, and I hollered, but there was not a soul to be seen; and as I could not leave it there all night, I fetched it home to you to see what's to be done with it."

As he spoke Mrs. Meadows unfastened an old, dark, tartan shawl; and there, with its thumb in its mouth, and a pair of very bright eyes fixed upon her, lay a little girl of about four months' old.

Her heart went out to it on the spot. With a mother's fond partiality she declared it to be the mortal image of the little angel she had lost. That had been a peculiarly ugly, watery-eyed mite; this was one of the most beautiful infants that it was possible to see, with golden rings of flaxen hair, and a skin like wax. Its clothes were neat but plain; round its neck there was a black ribbon, attached to which there depended a curious, old embossed gold ring, but this seemed more as if it were intended for a plaything for the baby than to have any other import.

"If she is claimed well and good," said Mrs. Meadows. "Of course we must do honestly, and give her up; and if we hear nothing we will keep her instead of our own."

To this John Meadows agreed without demur.

The foundling was never sought for. It was identified by the neighbours as the Meadows' own child, and as such was in time christened and brought up.

The worthy gardener and his wife rarely remembered that she was not their own flesh and blood; and when the recollection flashed across them they thrust it away at once.

She was never to know—no one was to know that but just their two selves. And thus Rose grew up to years of discretion—well, if not to years of surprising beauty; and the fame of the gardener's daughter at Danesford Place spread as far as the next two parishes.

For a girl of her rank in life she had received a very tolerable education, thanks to the local school; she could write a neat hand, had as good a general idea of history and geography as most young ladies; was a fair arithmetician, and a skilful needlewoman. Her education, as far as it went, was sound and solid, but she knew no language but her own, nor a note of music. Now school was a thing of the past; she stayed at home, helped her mother in the house, and dusted, swept and polished, but from washing pots and the wash-tub she was held exempt!

A great deal of her time was spent with her needle in her hand, and she found a ready sale for her embroidery at a fancy and outfitting shop in the nearest town of Caversham.

On fine evenings she would stroll up to the gardens, and return with her father; or—not seldom—she would wander about the deserted grounds alone. Other times she would assist her mother at one of her great periodical dustings and cleanings. At "The Place" this function usually lasted a week, and one or two old charwomen were called in on these occasions. Rooms were swept, cobwebs torn down, windows opened, and a few fires lighted.

Rose delighted in these cleanings. Her own tasks accomplished, she would roam from room to room, gazing at the pictures, fingering the ornaments, sitting on the faded oak chairs, and peopling the house with the children of her imagination.

The great entrance hall, the library, the suite of three drawing-rooms, the squire's room, were all very well each in their own way; but what Mary revelled in were the great state bedrooms upstairs, with their silver-framed, spotted, varnished mirrors and tapestried walls, and immense plumed and curtained couches.

She also liked the arched little passages, queer, abrupt staircases, and mysterious and unexpected doors which abounded on the second and third storey. She, thanks to her mother, knew all the histories of the place; the names of the rooms, the names of the portraits, and had, from years of habit quite come to look upon the place as her second home.

Lady Mary's dressing-room was her favourite resort; it was a half-circular boudoir, panelled with faded blue and tarnished silver. It was lined with low maple book-shelves, and the

walls were covered with water-colour sketches and small portraits on ivory and larger ones in oil.

Rose knew them all intimately—from the dowager in powder to the coronet who had been killed at Waterloo. And she had her favourites and her aversions too.

Her special aversion was a woman with fair skin, a very low body, reddish curly hair, and cruel-looking green eyes—a very beautiful woman, as far as colouring and form went, but her expression of malignant triumph spoilt all.

It was a comparatively modern picture. The dress was that of fifty years previously—a court costume, lappet and plumes, and on the lady's neck glittered a superb diamond necklace.

Rose hated this portrait; its green eyes seemed to be always following and watching her; and generally, the first thing she did when she came up to spend a long afternoon in Lady Mary's room, was to march over to "Madame," as was the picture's name, and turn her face to the wall.

A favourite, who was never treated in the like rude manner, was a head and shoulders sketch of a young officer with dark eyes and a military cloak thrown over his shoulders. This picture had a curious fascination for her, and the more she gazed at that handsome, resolute, but rather sad face, the more she was convinced that the original was the hero of some mysterious, and, doubtless, tragical history!

A large dressing-table, with curious japanned drawers and a spotted circular mirror in a tarnished silver frame, were the only objects from which the room could legitimately claim its title.

No chests of drawers, wardrobes, or mirrors were to be seen; only armchairs, little chippendale tables, cabinets, and bookcases.

Drawn up in the least uncomfortable of these chairs, with her feet on the deep window-sill, Mary spent many an hour (a happy hour!) buried in reading volumes of poetry, old romances, and books of the keepsake era.

She read quickly, and was rapidly devouring the library, so to speak. "Rasselas," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "The Old English Baron," and other grisly tales of the latter type—were eagerly and thoughtfully perused.

"I can't think what takes Mary's fancy, sitting up in Lady Mary's room half her time," grumbled her mother to her confidante, Mrs. Spinks. "Dear woman, the moment her task of dusting is done off she goes and shuts herself up there, and I've all the work in the world to get her home to tea."

"Then she knows nothing?" said Mrs. Spinks, with a mysterious jerk of her black bonnet.

"Oh, not a word! and for your life don't let her."

"Not I, my dear. It's a wonder she has not seen the stain on the floor!"

"Oh! she saw that years ago—one time we had up the carpet. She has seen it twice a year this many a year."

"Well?" in a tone of awe-struck inquiry.

"Oh! a lie in them cases is no harm, in my opinion. No need to put notions in the girl's head and prevent her setting foot in the house, like half the folks in the county. So when she saw it and called out, I told her it was just a can of paint that had been spilt there years ago and would not come out."

"Paint, indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Spinks, in a sepulchral tone.

"Well, it did as well as anything else. Still, you would not have me tell her—whist! here she is," as a distant door banged; but after waiting for a moment in silent expectation the two matrons resumed their conversation, speaking with bated breath.

"I heard them talking at the 'Three Moles' ere yesterday," said the charwoman; "and some of 'em said the place was going out of Chancery, and that an heir had been found in Australia!"

"Aye, did ye now? Well, I and my man has had no word of it. I'll believe in the heir when I see him."

"It would do a deal of good to the village if the place was open again," continued the other.

"Give lots of employment, and many's the hand that's badly in want of work. Wages is low and times is bad."

"To be sure, to be sure," interrupted Mrs. Meadows, rather tartly. "But how can there be an heir when Mr. Godfrey was never heard of this seventeen year? He's dead for sure, and he, after the master, was the last of the family—the good old family."

"Faith, 'twas old enough," Mrs. Spinks said, "but I never knew it was good before. What with the former Darvalls gambling and drinking, and shooting in duels, and the last man turning out and cursing his son—not to speak of other things—the less said about goodness the better if you are to ask me!"

"Oh! well, we have all our faults," returned Mrs. Meadows, who did not care to hear any slights put upon the dead and gone Darvalls, in whose family she had been second housemaid for more years than she cared to mention.

She was by no means in her first youth when honest John Meadows offered his heart, his hand, and a share of the west lodge.

"Some people's faults does be nothing to others; those Darvalls were a by-word. It would be no harm if they did die out," persisted Mrs. Spinks.

"They are dead, sure enough; there's no doubt about it," returned Mrs. Meadows, with precision. "You know the belief they have in the family about a picture?"

"Yes that picture in the dining-room of the man on the white horse. They say it falls down just before a Darvall dies, but I misdoubt it."

"Then you need not, it's as true as true. It fell the day before the old lady died. She was found dead in her chair, her knitting in her hand; it fell before the master died, and we found it on the floor some fifteen years back, and that, in my opinion, was for Mr. Godfrey."

"If it was my picture I'd burn it in the kitchen fire," said Mrs. Spinks, decidedly; that would put an end to its warnings once for all."

"Hush—ah!" cried her companion, in a terrified whisper. "Don't say such things, tain't lucky. There's queer things about us that we cannot account for," she added, nervously looking over her shoulder with a pallid face.

"Oh, queer enough!" agreed the other. "There's a curse on the place, or I'm mistaken; and that minds me to tell you that 'Humpy' is about again. He was met in the long wood last week."

"Mercy! You don't tell me so! I thought there was an end of all that! What in the world brings the likes of him round?"

"I suppose it's the chance of people living here again that bring him up," answered Mrs. Spinks, with horrible significance.

"Aye! but I see no chance whatever o' that. Where would they come from?"

"From Australia! It's not denied that a cousin of old Mr. Darvall went there, having got into trouble; and these are some of his people that are now putting in for the place."

"They have to prove themselves first," said Mrs. Meadows.

"Oh, aye! I'll warrant the lawyers will see to all that. Well, now I think this room's about done, and we may be going home. I've got that lot of dust in me mouth I'd be all the better for a cup o' tea."

"Well, we will just call Mary, then, and go," returned Mrs. Meadows, taking off a huge apron and removing a towel that she wore carefully pinned over her head. "I've had just about enough of the place for to-night, and to-morrow will finish it for this spell."

Exit the two old women.

CHAPTER II.

Another day's sweeping and dusting brought the labours of Madames Spinks and Meadows to an end, greatly to Mary's sorrow, for she had just commenced Sir Walter Scott's novels, and did not know how to tear herself away from Lady Mary's dressing-room.

It was the month of July, the evenings were

long, and time hung heavily on her hands. Her daily household tasks over, her sewing finished for the day, she would walk up to "The Place," and whilst her father went round the green-houses, she would go longingly round the house.

At length she found courage to confide to her mother her intense desire to read some of the books in the dressing-room. "Reading" implied study to worthy Mrs. Meadows; the girl was steady, industrious, and obedient—no gadabout. Why should she not have this pleasure, if pleasure it was?

It was far from Mrs. Meadows' own ideal, reading books all alone up in that ghostly old house, but since Mary knew nothing there was no harm done. And, "Yes, Mary might go. But mind you, Mary, you are to be ready at whatever hour your father calls for you; he will come into the hall and give a shout up the stairs, and don't keep him waiting, whatever you do. You can go up whenever you have the tea-things washed; and mind to care of the books, and take none of them away with you."

Delighted with this permission, that very evening, armed with the keys, Mary set forth. Tears of any kind were foreign to her nature; she had been born with a naturally stout heart.

She entered the gloomy, silent hall, ascended the stairs, tripped along the corridor, and entered with a song on her lips.

She had a sweet but uncultivated voice, which was often to be heard about the wet lodge as she went about her work.

She lost no time in reaching down "Ivanhoe," pulling up a chair, and seating herself near the window with her back well-turned towards the obnoxious portrait of "Madame."

Just as she was almost breathlessly reading the account of the tournament, and was leagued away in mind from every place but "Ashby-de-la-Zouche," she was somewhat rudely brought back to her present surroundings by the door behind her being flung open so violently and so suddenly that it made her start and drop her book, and her heart began to beat as it had never beaten in its life. And why? She could not have told the reason if she had been asked. It was the unexpectedness of the thing, the loud noise coming in the midst of such solemn silence.

With all Mary's courage, it was fully two minutes after she ventured to look round, and then she did so very slowly and very cautiously. There was nothing whatever to be seen, nothing at all.

She rose and advanced and looked out upon the corridor; all was empty, all was silent; apparently there was not a soul in the house but herself.

She waited and listened, then closed the door and went back to her place, trying to tell herself that it was the wind; but where could the wind come from on a sultry summer's evening?

After a little time she resumed her book, and never took her eyes and her thoughts away from it till she heard her father's gruff voice in the hall below, calling out—

"Mary! Mary! Are you ready? Come along, my bookworm!"

As she walked home beside him, over the mossy, weed-covered avenue, she felt half tempted to relate her recent experience in the dressing-room; but in the end she was ashamed. Her father would laugh to hear of her being frightened just because a door suddenly opened of itself, as all doors sometimes do.

"Mother is often talking of the story of 'The Place,' father, what is the story?" she inquired, abruptly. "I don't mean of hundreds of years ago, and about Oliver Cromwell, but of what you remember—what happened in your time?"

"Oh, I only remember old Mr. Darvall's leap; he lived in a couple of rooms, himself and a queer secretary, and they were always making experiments with chemicals, and twice they nearly blew up the house. He was half crazy with this nonsense, and with pride too; and the old lady had a companion, and her work and her charities, but she never held up her head since Mr. Godfrey was turned out. No, never."

"Was that the son?"

* Yes. He and his father had a desperate

quarrel, and the old man drove him out of the place and cursed him, and he was never seen no more. He was a fine, high-spirited gentleman, and we were all main sorry," and John shook his head solemnly.

"Well, and after that?"

"After that the old lady drooped and drooped, and died. She was found dead in her chair one day, and then the old man was not long after her. At her end he was rather weak in the head, and used to cry like a child, and call for Mr. Godfrey; but Mr. Godfrey was never heard of again, and there was not a single relation to follow the bears. There's Darvall they say in Australia, but there was not one in England; and there was a hunt for Mr. Godfrey, and the estate was put in Chancery; and only for this talk of a claim now it would not be long before it would lapse to the Crown, and there would be an end of it."

"And is that the whole story?" cried Mary, disappointed. "I thought from what mother said there was a—"

"It's enough for you, my dear," interrupted her father; "the rest is best buried and forgotten, and forgotten I'm thinking it is; and, any way, it's no concern of yours or mine. Old Mr. Darvall was a terrible hard old man, and drove his family nearly mad with his tyranny and his tempers. I'm sure Mr. Godfrey would gladly have changed places with me, and been the son of an honest tradesman, and his own master. Well, here we are! Is supper ready, mother?" to Mrs. Meadows, in the doorway.

Undaunted by her previous experience, and drawn by the magnet of Sir Walter Scott, Mary returned to her haunt the next evening, and read undisturbed—read for a week without any interruption—and had almost forgotten the episode of the open door, when the same curious incident occurred again. This time the door seemed to be nearly swung off its hinges, and this time Mary quickly jumped to her feet, and turned about.

There was no one to be seen; it was getting dusk. She had been holding her book close to the window-pane as it was, and straining her eyes, and looking hard at the open doorway she could see nothing.

She put away her novel, took up her sunbonnet and went and looked out on the corridor.

It was dusk—the light dusk of a summer's evening—downstairs nothing; she descended slowly, and stood in the hall in some uncertainty.

She was half afraid, and yet she was ashamed to go out to the garden and tell her father that she dared not stay in the house alone.

Standing irresolutely thus she noticed a gleam of candle-light coming from under the door of the library, and took heart at once. Her mother had been talking of taking some bronze ornaments home, and giving them a rare good polishing at her leisure, for it was Mrs. Meadow's pride and pleasure to keep the furniture, &c., as if it were her own.

"No matter who owns it, or if it don't belong to no one, I'll do my duty all the same, and not be ashamed if the Queen herself was to ask to look over the house," was her constant boast.

"Of course it's mother," said Mary, boldly entering the long dining-room, which in turn opened on the library, and the library into a little room that had been Mr. Darvall's sanctum, where he kept his business papers, where he wrote furious letters to his son, his lawyer, and his tenants, at a large brass bureau that stood against the wall, and filled up a very respectable portion of the room.

Mary's light footfall on the Turkey carpets was not audible, and she came up to the door of the little room, fully expecting to see her mother, and stood on the threshold and looked in.

She saw a lighted candle standing on the bureau and a man sitting in front of it, ransacking the drawers with both hands; another man was standing up looking at a paper very closely, and reading out names.

Mary stood on the threshold and stared at them in speechless astonishment.

* Have you got the certificate of Fred Darvall's

marriage?" said the man who was standing up, in a gruff voice.

"Yes, this is it," holding up a long strip of paper.

"Aye; and now have you got old John Darvall's will?"

"Yes," returned the other, promptly.

"And have you got all Fred's letters?"

"Yes, I believe so," holding out a packet.

"Then that's about all. We've done a good evening's work, and we may as well come away."

At this the man before the bureau rose, closed and locked the drawers, shut the lid down, and, putting the papers in his pockets, took up the candle and prepared to depart.

As he approached the door, followed by his companion Mary crept to one side, and sheltered herself behind the great heavy curtains of the library as they passed by; they passed so closely that she could have touched them with her hand.

One was a tall man, with a stoop; the other was stout and broad-shouldered.

She could not see their faces, for the tall man cautiously shaded the candle with his hand, and they walked, as it were, by stealth.

Mary shrank closer and closer to the shutter and held her breath as they went by, and passed into the dining-room, thence into the hall.

She waited till she heard them cross the stone flags, and saw that the candle had been suddenly blown out.

There was no light in the room now, save that of the moon, which shone in at the tops of the shutters, which were only partially closed; by this light she saw a small oblong white object on the floor, it looked like a newspaper folded up.

She stooped down and took it in her hand, and saw that it was some law paper, that had evidently been dropped by the recent visitors.

She felt no desire to run after them, she heard them now descending the steps of the portico; she did not wish to take it home. She had some idea of leaving it on the table, and escaping, when, to her horror, a voice beside her said, in a whisper,—

"Give it me!"

Hearing this unexpected request she turned abruptly round, but could see nothing; vainly her eyes tried to pierce the dense shadows of that large room.

With a violent effort she flung the parchment from her into the farthest corner, and then raced into the hall from the hall to the steps and the sweep, literally breathless with terror.

Although but a moment or two had elapsed since their departure, there was not a sign of the two strangers to be seen, not a solitary figure broke the monotony of the great green park; it was as if they had dissolved into air.

Mary, with her knees literally knocking together, once more ascended the steps, hurriedly slammed and locked the great entrance door, and fled home.

Her premature arrival, and her pale, distracted appearance, filled her mother with dismay, and Meadows himself coming in at the same time they cross-examined her eagerly, almost in the same breath. Curious that they should both ask the identical question,—

"Did you see anything?"

"Yes," she stammered, "I did."

"Where? In the dressing-room?"

"No, down below, in the little study off the library. I saw a light under the door, and I made sure it was you, mother, coming after those brawns, and I peeped in quietly—"

"Yes. Go on, girl!"

"And I saw two men at the bureau with papers."

"Old!"

"Yes, oldish, I think. They passed quite close to me to where I was hid behind the curtains, and one of them dropped a paper, and when they had gone I picked it up, and, just as I was thinking what to do with it, a voice whispered, all of a sudden, 'Give it to me,' and I looked and could see no one, so I just flung it anywhere and ran away as hard as ever I could."

"Ah, dear me! Well, well! It's a strange house. There used to be queer tales, but I never saw caught myself," said John, buttering a hunk of bread. "Say nothing about it to anyone, Mary, you will only get laughed at, or blamed for making too free with the place. You won't be for reading so much in the dressing-room now, I'm thinking."

"No, never; never again. I don't care if I never see the inside of the place as long as I live," she returned, emphatically.

And she kept her word. The remainder of "Ivanhoe" remained unread, and at the next monthly clearing she begged to be excused her share of the performance, and chose to stay at home and undertake the family dinner in preference to dusting and polishing at "The Place."

Not very long afterwards she went into Caversham to dispose of her fancy work, and made some purchases.

Caversham is reached by "bus" from her part of the world, and is a large white town, lying in a hollow—a town of very genteel aspect, with a huge border of villas, mansions, terraces, "gardens," &c., and a town notorious for its respectability and, to a certain extent, fashion.

On this particular day it was unusually lively; the elections were going on.

Had Mary, the benighted country girl, known of this, she would have postponed her visit; but John Meadows never saw, or cared to see, a newspaper that was not a week old, so she had no warning.

It was only when she got to the Mall at Caversham and saw the big placards, and the carriages dashing hither and thither, with blue and yellow rosettes at the horses' heads, and vast crowds of eager shouting partisans, that she was aware that there was anything unusual going on in Caversham.

If she could only gain Miss Tatting's shop she would be safe. She really felt very much dismayed as she tried to edge her way along, and actually terrified as a big, brutal-looking man, in a thunder-and-lightning suit of checks, and a rakish-looking hat, came along beside her, saying, with a hideous leer,

"Don't be in a hurry, darling, I'll look after you. Take my arm and come along, and I'll see you through it."

Mary pretended not to have heard him, and hastened her pace still more.

"No, no. Now, where's the good of this, my beauty! You come with me and don't be so shy. We'll go into the 'Golden Fleece' and drink success to the yellow colours, eh? and we'll have a snack, and I'll escort you up to the rooms and we will hear the speeches, you may as well come. Why not? I suppose your mother knows you're out."

"Please to leave me alone, and mind your own business," she answered, between her chattering teeth.

"Oh, a pretty girl is always my business." Reaching out his arm he drew her towards him.

She struggled, and screamed, and finally broke away, and darted down a long alley, her tipsy persecutor in full pursuit. In the mêlée she had lost her hat, her little cape had been torn from her shoulders; she felt her arms failing her—her pursuer was within arm's length when a deliverer appeared. A man came suddenly out of a side door, coolly put out his foot and tripped up her follower, who lay sprawling like a lobster on his hands and knees in the road.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded the stranger, eyeing the brute determinately.

For all answer Mary Meadows staggered up against the wall and burst into tears.

"She's my young woman!" cried the other, rising, with curses, "and I'm only a'ving a bit of a lark. Don't you go interfering in other folks' business, or it will be worse for you," he continued, with a scowl. "Come on, Fanny, never mind that bloke."

"I—I—never saw him before in my life," she gasped. "Oh! sir, please send him away. Please do!" she entreated, with a fresh burst of tears.

"Here, come inside," said the gentleman, pushing back the door which opened into a long

old-fashioned garden at the rear of a row of tall houses.

Mary lost not a second in accepting the invitation, and the next moment the door was slammed and locked, and her would-be escort was left alone, roaring vengeance in the lane.

Mary's new acquaintance was undoubtedly a gentleman, young and good-looking, and well-dressed. He stood before her in some doubt for a second, and then he said,—

"Tell me what I can do for you? How did it happen?"

"I—I—did not know. It was the elections, and I came into town and got mixed with the crowd, and could not get out again, and then that man followed me, and I lost my hat, and he tore off my cape, and then I ran away."

Her companion looked at her intently, as she stood before him in her simple cotton gown, with the eye of a critical connoisseur.

It is not only that she is so very pretty, but there is something of high-bred refinement in the turn of her small brown head, and long throat; he noted her pure, creamy skin, and her well-shaped, taper hands, tanned though they are by sun and wind, do not escape his eyes. She looks a lady to the very tips of those dainty fingers, but her nose belies her looks; ladies do not go abroad alone on election days. He is puzzled, too, as it were to classify her.

"I am obliged to be at the committee-rooms at once," he said, hurriedly, taking out his watch, "but I will take you inside, and my uncle's old housekeeper will look after you, and we will send you home safely. May I ask where you live?"

"I live near Daneford Place," she answered, simply.

"And strange to say I come from that part of the world also. My uncle is Eliot of Cangort."

Cangort was a fine property about two miles from Daneford Place; the woods of either ran side by side, though the houses were far apart.

"How odd that we have never met! I generally spend my leave down there, and I don't think I've ever seen you."

Mary coloured violently. Was she likely to meet a person of Mr. Eliot's position? she who lived in the gate lodge at "The Place." He was surely making fun of her.

"I am going in to speak to Mrs. Steele, the housekeeper," he said abruptly, leaving her momentarily alone.

He did not choose to appear with his unexpected guest without having had a preliminary interview with the greatest old gossip in Caversham. In a few hurried sentences he told his tale, put a bank-note into Mrs. Steele's hands, saying as he did so,—

"Ring her out in a hat and all that sort of thing. Find out where she lives, and if I'm not back by six o'clock hire a fly and take her home. She is in the garden. Come on, and take her in charge, and offer her lunch and everything that's proper."

And sure enough there in the garden she discovered a very nice-looking young lady—yes, and dropped a curtsey to her as such. A young lady in a plain blue bird's-eye cotton and black silk tie, but minus what she would call her "walking things," and with her hair and collar considerably tumbled, and traces of tears on her face.

At first Mrs. Steele treated her young charge with great distinction, took her up to the best bedroom, brought her hot water and towels, and waited on her with the deepest solicitude.

Then she offered her wine or tea, and, needless to add, her guest was in favour of the latter.

After this she thought she would fall in her duty if she did not discover who the young lady was—where she came from.

A few pointed questions revealed the appalling fact that the young woman whom she had called "miss" was nothing more or less than a pauper gardener's daughter.

"Your father the gardener at Daneford Place!" she cried, with a crimson face. "Why, bless my heart, if I ever heard the likes of this!" and she seated herself with a plunge in the

nearest arm-chair, and surveyed her visitor with angry amusement.

"Why, for what did you take me? Who did you think I was?" inquired Mary, rather aghast.

"Who did I think you were? I took you for a lady born and bred, to be sure!"

"Me!" cried Mary, becoming crimson in her turn.

"Yes, you. Well, I'll never boast again! Think of Susan Steele, as has seen the might and beat of quality, being took in like that! Deary, deary me! I know your father well, and I remember your mother, though it's years since I saw her—a plain-favoured body, too. In the name of fortune will ye tell me where ye got your good looks!" she demanded, forcibly.

Mary shook her head hopelessly, and made no reply.

"Mr. Maxwell was took in too," she continued, peevishly. "Why, he drew me aside, and give me five pounds, and said I was to get you a proper hat, and that. Yes, and he said for the young lady, not the girl, or the young person. It beats all, that it do! I never was so fooled before; not that it's your fault."

Rising and coming over to the tray she poured herself out a cup of tea, and sat down before Mary, evidently resolved to recoup herself at once for her recent mistake.

The tea had a soothing influence, and she poured out three or four cups, cooled them, and drank them from the saucer, meanwhile conversing more and more confidentially with her vis-à-vis, whom she submitted to a close examination about her parents, her prospects, her age, education, and admirers.

"Don't tell me you are seventeen past, and not a follow after you. Maybe, you are grand in yourself!"

"Maybe I am, Mrs. Steele," redressing, and recollecting Farmer Jones's son, who had offered to walk with her on Sundays, and whom she had snubbed, and the civilities of the guard of the "bus," which she had likewise quenched.

"Mr. Eliot of Cangort is a queer man, isn't he?" said Mary, in her turn.

"Aye. He is Captain Eliot's uncle, and we're married. The Captain is his heir. Mr. Eliot is old and softish, and will never marry. He's a different person altogether from Mr. Max, as we call the Captain; he likes ladies, and balls, and hunting, and going about the world—just the opposite of the other, who is very strict and severe. All the same, they are main good friends. It's a pity there's no lady at Cangort; it's as bad as if it was shut up—like Daneford Place. By the way, did you ever go over the house?"

"Oh, yes; often."

"Only by day, I expect, then," said Mrs. Steele, significantly.

"Oh, I've been there pretty late, too."

"And what did you see? I know you saw something. I can tell by your face. You can't deceive Susan Steele!"

"I would rather not talk about it, Mrs. Steele, if you please."

"You need not mind me, since I know the whole story, for my mother was still-room maid—aye, a matter of sixty years ago now. She was there when it all happened, and I know the story as well as you do yourself."

"But I don't know it at all, Mrs. Steele. I've never heard anything excepting that old Mr. Darwall drove his only son out of the house and disinherited him, and was sorry for it when he was dying."

"Oh! that's nothing at all. What I mean is what happened fifty years ago in Lady Mary's dressing-room. Would you like to hear it?"

"Yes, I should, very much indeed," returned Mary, with unconcealed eagerness. "Nothing could interest me more."

"Well, I'll just pour myself out another cup, and then I'll begin, for it's dry work talking."

Having swallowed her fifth cup of tea, cleared her throat three times, she commenced the following history.



MARY STOOD ON THE THRESHOLD, AND STARED AT THE TWO MEN IN SPERCHLESS ASTONISHMENT.

CHAPTER III.

"YOU must know, of course, that for the last three generations there has always been one of the Darvall family lost or missing. I suppose you know that, at any rate!" said Mrs. Steele, impressively, nodding her head at Mary Meadows.

"No, I never heard of it till now," returned the girl, humbly. "Of course I know there's Mr. Godfrey——"

"Yes," interrupted the housekeeper. "As before him, his father's brother, Frederick, and before him—well, that brings us just to about fifty years back, when the first one went—well, astray, and never was heard of no more."

"Mr. Darvall of that day was a real, grand gentleman to drink and hunt, and kept a house full of company. He married a French lady, and had two sons, Robert and Claude; Claude, you know, is a French name."

"Mrs. Darvall was very gay, and filled the house with company, and such fiddling, and singing, and dancing as never, never was seen!"

"However, one cold morning she died, and her niece came over from Paris, and kept house for the old master and the two young men. By all accounts, she was a most beautiful woman, and as wicked as she could walk. Her maid, a French girl, told queer stories to my mother, of lovers, and letters, and duels."

"She had been married to an old man, and he was dead, and she had heaps of debt, for the old husband left all he could to his own people."

"She could do as she liked with the Squire here. She wore the family diamonds, and many a fine silk purse full of golden guineas she got out of him, and many a debt he paid."

"The two young men were just her slaves. She followed the fox bounds in a scarlet habit, and she went to all the balls in the country for twenty miles around, dressed like a duchess."

"She drove in a coach-and-four, as grand as if she was the Queen. She had as many lovers as would line the avenue, from the gate to the hall door, and she played one off against the other in

beautiful style. They say she could have married half the gentlemen in the county if she had liked."

"Those were grand times at 'The Place' when she was mistress. The poor old master was given up to his port wine latterly, and cared for nothing else, and she managed him and his sons exactly as she pleased. There were hunting-breakfasts, and dinners, and dances, and routs of all sorts—mostly gentlemen at them. The big, grand ladies began to be rather shy of Madame, and only a few that were no great shakes used to come, but there were men in plenty!"

"After a while it was given out that she was going to marry her cousin Claude—the eldest son—and everyone was surprised, for he was very quiet, and kept himself in the background rather, and he was a good five years or more younger than Madame, though she was so beautiful, somehow, her age was no matter at all."

"Well, they were married, and went off to France for a bit, and then came and settled down altogether at 'The Place.' The old man was weak in the head now, and the living was quieter—no more big junkettings."

"Madame used to have people to stay with her. One especially, a French chap, with a handsome, wicked face that Mr. Claude could not abide, but Madame set great store by him; he rode with her, walked with her, sang songs, and spent hours up in the blue boudoir with her, and more than once my mother swore she saw him kiss her."

"Mr. Claude was quiet, but he was jealous; and at last he forbade this Count the house, and there was a great scene one day—Madame shrieking and screaming, Mr. Claude cursing and shouting, and he was heard to order the Count out of the house on the spot, and swear a big oath that if he ever caught him cross the threshold again he should never pass it alive."

"Well, the Count went away, and things were desperately dull. Madame sulked in her room for weeks, and wrote dozens of letters, and got them too. Then she cheered up a bit when Mr.

Claude was elected for the county, and had to go up to his seat in Parliament."

"Madame got him in, people said. She drove about here and there, and talked to her people, and bewitched them till they did not know what they were saying. She gave bribes, she gave kisses for votes—her very heart was set on getting her husband into Parliament, so she said—and he got in, too!—and he and she seemed to kind of make friends over it, and he wanted to take her up to town, he said, and show her off at Court, and present her to the king, but Madame would not stir a step. She said her place was with her aged uncle, his father, and she resigned the pleasure and her inclination to her duty."

"A pretty duty! Scarce had she kissed her husband, and seen him off for town when the French Count arrived, smiling and sleek, and took up his quarters as before. There was no one in the house but Madame, the old master, Madame's maid and companion, and the Count. Of course there was plenty of servants in the servants' hall. Madame no more cared for servants than if they were statues and deaf and dumb."

(To be continued.)

WHEN a South Sea Island mother wishes to chastise her child she seldom resorts to slapping and slippers—of course she has none. Instead of using the forms of punishment customary among civilised mothers, she pulls the child's hair and bites some part of the body, generally the fleshy part of the arm. In wandering about the villages one sees many children having on their bodies scars produced by wounds inflicted by their mothers' teeth. When a mother wishes to caress her child she deftly draws her thumb across its eyebrows or cheek, or gently seizes its cheek between her teeth. The rubbing of noses is also a mark of affection among the King-mill Islanders, as it is among the Maoris of New Zealand.

"My own impression is she cares now."

"What!"

"Did it never occur to you? Mrs. Carleton and I felt sure of it from the first. Lettice Dene gave up Ashcroft that you might marry Julia and be happy. She wanted to secure your happiness. She cared nothing for her own, therefore we thought she loved you."

"I only hope you may be right."

"Of course you won't start till after the wedding. Julia told me you had promised to give her away."

"I couldn't miss Jill's wedding. I shall stay for that, and to see Aunt Susan established in London, then I shall leave old Martha in charge of Ivy Cottage, and start on my quest."

"You are either the rashest or the bravest man of my experience. A skilled detective gave up the search as hopeless nearly a year ago, and you think you will succeed."

"Well, you see to him it was just a 'case,' to me it means finding the girl I love. Heaven knows, I never grudged poor Isabel the remnant of her days. I never wished to shorten that sad life, but I can't forget that her death has set me free."

"How do you intend to begin your quest? You know that advertisements have failed."

"I know. I shan't trust to them. Some time ago I happened to do a service to the man at the fancy shop where Lettice's letters were taken in, and, I suppose out of gratitude, he confessed he had kept back a clue that might have helped us. The letters she received at his shop were not addressed to herself, but to 'Miss Brown.' There were only two. Both were in the same hand—a man's—and both bore the Fulham postmark."

"Fulham's a large suburb, and it's a year ago," said Mr. Carleton, despondently.

"I know. But I've something else to go on. Lettice's rooms at the Croft have been left untouched just as she used them. I went over there last week and spent two hours hunting about for any trifles which could throw light upon her plans. At last, wedged in between the writing-table drawers and the paper which lined it, I came upon an advertisement—by itself it would be worthless since it only signified that a lady companion is wanted who must not object to go abroad—but the answers are to be addressed to a Fulham library, taken in conjunction with the fact both the letters Lettice received at Ashleigh had the Fulham postmark, I think we may take it as certain that Lettice left here to enter upon this particular situation."

"I begin to think you have mistaken your vocation, Sir John, and that you should have been a detective. There's just this, Lettice is of age now and her own mistress. Why did she not write to you then? When she was of age she could legally renounce Ashcroft in your favour. If she is alive, why did she not do it?"

Sir John shook his head. He went back to Ashleigh that day, and the following week attended Julia's wedding, where the grave aristocratic-looking young baronet in his deep mourning attracted almost as much notice as the bride.

"I hope your wedding will be the next, Jack," said his aunt; when all the excitement was over, and Sir John was dining alone with her. He was to spend the night at Lorne Cottage, and the next day would escort Mrs. Seaton to her new home before setting out on his travels. The widow, in common with the rest of the world, believed Jack was simply going away for change of scene and a taste of enjoyment now his old cousin's legacy had made him a rich man again.

"I hope it will," said Jack, heartily, "and I promise you this, Aunt Susan, you shall come to it."

"Of course, I mean no slight to dear Isabel," said Mrs. Seaton, quietly, "but you had been parted so long, and she, even at the last, was not as others are; you couldn't be expected to pine for her."

Sir John looked pale. Even now he could not bear any sudden allusion to the secret he had kept so long.

"Isabel is at rest," he said, gravely, "and I have probably a good many years before me. I hope to find a wife to brighten them for me,

and as, thanks to my kind old cousin, I am no longer poor, I am going to take a long holiday while I seek the future Lady North."

"It was so good of you to get Denis Fane appointed to the Croft agency; now he and Julia won't be so very poor."

"Very rich, I call them—young, happy, and devoted to each other. Now remember, Aunt Susan, you are not to disparage your son-in-law, for he is really a first-rate fellow."

He and Mrs. Seaton parted at King's Cross. He put her into a cab for the fashionable boarding-houses, and himself went down to Fulham on the top of an omnibus.

He alighted at Walham Green, and turning into a tobacconist's, made a liberal purchase of cigars, saying, as the attendant was packing them up:

"I want to find a shop about here called 'Ashton's Library,' do you happen to know where it is?"

"It's not much of a shop, sir," said the man, loyally; "quite a small affair. Of course I can direct you to it, but there's one or two places close by here where you'll be much better served."

Sir John, however, persisted in his desire, and was accordingly directed to Ashton's, which, he had to confess, deserved the strictures it had received.

There are such things as unlucky roads and unlucky shops—roads begun before the real needs of the locality are understood, and shops opened hastily to serve inhabitants who never came.

Fulham-road was a short thoroughfare between Fulham proper and Walham Green. Built when Fulham ceased to be rural, by some ill-fortune it was just out of the way of everything, omnibus routes, railway stations, main roads; the poor little thoroughfare was remote from all, and in consequence the half-dozen shops it contained, instead of flourishing were in a chronic state of depression.

Most of them had changed hands several times, and the corner one had degenerated from a stationer's and fancy shop to a shabby emporium which dealt in toys, sweets, newspapers, and articles of general utility, though a shelf or two of well-thumbed novels still made good its claim to its original title.

"Is this Ashton's Library?"

"Yes, sir," said the young woman behind the counter, who nursed a baby and was evidently the proprietor's wife. "We've been here two years, but we never altered the name, as my husband thought it might hurt the custom. Not that that's much," the poor thing added, dejectedly.

"You have been here two years, then I expect you can tell me what I want to learn. Do you remember who inserted this advertisement? It appeared last January, and the answers were addressed here."

He handed her the slip of paper. From the look of things he did not think she would have customers enough to forget any but, on the other hand, lots of people have letters left at some small shop near them, paying for the accommodation, and never entering the place before or after.

But there was no mistaking Mrs. Floyd's face. She evidently did remember the advertisement, and not with pleasure.

"If you're any relation of the Captain's, sir, and would give us his address, it would be the kindest thing you ever did. He dealt here regular for six weeks, and had the best of everything in our line. We sent in the bill at the end of the month, but didn't like to hurry him he was such a gentleman. My husband was writing a little note just to remind him our prices didn't allow of credit, when we heard he'd left. He went off to foreign parts and we've never heard of him since."

"I am no friend of his," said Sir John. "I am most anxious to find a young lady whom I believe to have answered this advertisement."

"Please you, sir, heaps answered it; the Captain carried off a hundred letters the first day, and Miss had fifty or more the next."

"How much did he owe you?" asked Sir John.

"Over three pounds. It seems a lot, but he had heaps of Christmas illustrated papers. Then there was that very advertisement he never paid for, and books and stationery of all sorts. The Captain never stinted himself."

"Well, I have the strongest possible reason for wishing to trace this man, and I am sorry to think you should have been victimized by him. I'll make you a fair offer. Tell me everything you can recollect about him, and I'll pay half his bill. If I find your information of any use I'll send you the other half in a week."

Mrs. Floyd looked delighted. No need to ask if she was poor. Evidently Ashton's Library was a failing speculation.

"It's little enough, I know; but what I tell you you may trust, sir. Captain Peyton lived in lodgings close by here, only nearer the Fulham-road. He had one daughter, and the advertisement you brought here was put in to find a companion for her. She was a handsome, strong girl; but she wasn't, so to say, like her pa. He was a gentleman out and out—she wasn't."

Young women seldom are gentlemen; but Jack quite understood the involved nature of the speech.

"They'd lived abroad a lot, and they were highly-connected. They went back to France. The day after the companion joined them they sent her down here for some luggage labels. I suppose they thought if they came themselves I should suspect they was off."

"And you saw her? What was she like?"

"She was nothing to look at, sir; and yet I liked her face—a gentle little thing, with big eyes, and a half-scared look. I remember telling my husband little Miss Browne looked too frightened to try and manage such a handful as the Captain's daughter. When we found they'd cleared out I up and went to their landlady, and she just laughed at me, and said I deserved what I got for trusting such an old swindler. She took his measure at once, and only agreed to let him the rooms if he paid in advance. She got her money; but she said he let people in all round, and that for weeks after he left his creditors kept ringing the bell, and making a set out."

"And she did not know where he went?"

"To Paris, she said. He left no address; but he and Miss Dora often talked of their flat in Paris, and the parties they gave. Mrs. White told me she believed the Captain just lived on his wife, and she hadn't a doubt he ran a gambling concern of some sort in Paris."

"You are sure Peyton was the real name!"

"It was the name he went by here, sir. He was a fine-looking man, and seemed a gentleman to his finger tips."

"And he had no wife?"

"He'd nobody with him here but Miss Dora. She was a tall, dashing-looking girl, but not a lady. There was a gentleman, called Trevor, used to come to see them pretty often; but they kept no other company in Fulham."

Mrs. Floyd received her money, and was deeply impressed with her good luck. Then Sir John went on to interview the landlady.

She was a woman of a very different type—more prosperous and less bitter. Frankly, she said she thought Captain Peyton lived by swindling other people; but as he never tried to swindle her she did not trouble about it.

She had seen the companion, a sickly little thing, who looked as if she had cried her eyes out. She wasn't the sort to stay long with such people as the Peytons; but she certainly left England with them.

So feeling that the clue to Lettice was the other side of the Channel, Sir John caught the boat express from Victoria en route for the gay French capital.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It seemed to Lettice Dene when she first found refuge within the convent walls that here surely peace must come to her troubled heart.

She reached Pont aux Dames in late spring, when the lilacs and horse-chestnuts were in full bloom, and all nature was looking its loveliest.

The Mother and the other functionaries received her very kindly. They seemed to vie with each other in making her feel at home, and for a time Lettice really believed that she was happy; but only for a time, her heart awake, the faculties, hushed to slumber during her long illness, reasserted themselves, and before the summer was over, Lettice knew perfectly that she still loved Sir John North, and that apart from him she could never be really happy.

In those days she grew to long for England with a yearning that was almost pain. She used to feel that she would give anything in the world, even her own life, just for a glimpse of Ashcroft—for power to revisit the old house—herself unseen—and know how it fared with those she loved.

Had Jack married Julia? Did they reign together at Ashcroft? and did they ever spare a kindly thought to the girl who had gone forth a lonely wanderer into the wide world that they might be happy?

Lettice made a good, conscientious teacher. The children loved her; the Mother was satisfied with their progress, only she had made up her mind that Miss Browne must not continue a heretic. She herself had been rescued as a brand from the burning, and brought within the fold of the true Church. It had been her privilege since then to convert more than one wanderer to the one faith, and she meant Lettice to be another sheet of her reaping.

"You are not happy, my daughter," she said one autumn evening when the nuns had just filed out of the little chapel, and she came on Lettice sitting alone correcting exercises, with a sad look on her sweet face; "will you not confide in me?"

She drew the girl away to her own room; a small, rigidly plain apartment, where the Mother wrote her letters and conducted other business. She made Miss Browne sit down by the fire, and kissed her.

"My child," she said, in English, "there is no happiness for anyone outside the true Church."

Lettice shivered. She could not tell this cold, grim woman that her whole soul was aching for human love, and that, Protestant or Catholic, only love could fill the aching void at her heart.

"Would you not like me to lend you books?" went on the Mother: "books, showing the difference between our Church and yours? I am quite sure, Lettice, that once brought to the true faith, you would embrace our life. You would seek peace for ever beneath the sanctity of the cloister."

Lettice doubted it.

"I think, Holy Mother," she said, slowly, "I am not good enough to join your Rule; even if I were of your faith, I should like a home and home ties."

The Mother did not seem in the least shocked; one would have said she had expected just such an answer.

"You are English, and in England girls are brought up to choose their own path in life. I hope, Lettice, you have not suffered your affections to wander to any unworthy object."

Lettice would not admit that Jack was unworthy, so she kept silent.

"You know the rules of this house, even for those who have not joined our order, and who are but passing sojourners here. You know that no one beneath this roof is allowed to receive a male visitor unless he is bound to her by the ties of blood?"

"I know," said Lettice; "but, indeed, I expect no gentlemen visitors. I had thought, perhaps, Madame de Monory might call to see me when she came to the Castle; but she has so much to occupy her I do not wonder that I have passed from her mind."

"Madame de Monory is not coming to the Castle this year," said the Mother; "the place is really her son's. I try not to heed the idle gossip of the world, but rumours of it penetrate even here. It is said that she and the young Baron have had a grievous quarrel; that she has left the hotel in the Faubourg St. Honoré, and taken an *étage* in a different part of Paris."

"I should not have thought they could quarrel,

they saw so little of each other; they had so few things in common."

The Mother looked at Lettice sharply. Was she really as innocent and unconscious as she seemed?

"It is said that Monsieur de Monory fell in love, and that the young lady was under his mother's care. During his temporary absence she disappeared, and no Madame positively refused him her address, the result was a quarrel."

Lettice said nothing, but she no longer looked unconscious; a dusky-red flush dyed her throat and cheeks.

"I see that you begin to understand," went on the Mother. "This afternoon Monsieur de Monory called here and asked for you. You know the rule I spoke of just now! He was refused admission. He departed in anger, saying he should write."

Then Lettice found her voice.

"I do not want to see him. I do not want to read his letters. I owe great kindness to his mother; why should I be the cause of her unhappiness? Madame, will you tell the Baron this—that I have no wish to meet him again?"

The Mother hesitated. Monsieur de Monory was richer and more powerful than his mother. Her star was waning, his growing brighter. It might be that a bride like Lettice would reform the young Baron. It would be a great thing for the convent to have, reigning at the Castle a girl who had lived beneath its shelter.

"My child," said the nun, gravely, "you are young, and the future offered you is a brilliant one. I have here a letter from the Baron in which he declares his intentions are honourable. He has passed the age at which his mother's consent is necessary to his marriage. He is willing that our priest should take every precaution to ensure the legality of the union. It is evident that he must love you unselfishly."

"I am a heretic," said the girl, simply. "Mother Marie, you would not help one of your faith to marry a heretic!"

"Monsieur the Baron has been wild," confessed the nun. "We think that a good wife might restore him to the right path, and you are no bigot, Lettice. It has seemed to me often that you are not far from the faith."

"I cannot marry Monsieur de Monory," said the girl, firmly. "Mother Marie, I can never marry anyone. I only want to fill my life with honest work that I may not feel so lonely, but love can have no part in my life. Long ago, or it seems long to me, I gave away my heart once for all. I can never love again."

"And he died?"

Lettice shook her head.

"He loved another."

"Monsieur de Monory is young, rich and handsome," said the nun; "as his wife you would have a great power for good."

But Lettice was not to be persuaded; she kept to her first answer; she would not see Victor or read his letter. Nothing in the world would induce her to be his wife.

The Mother superior of the convent received the young Baron in the visitors' room and made known to him this decision.

"I don't believe it," Victor cried, hotly. "It's not her own doing to refuse me. Either my mother has got at her and appealed to her gratitude, or she has heard tales of my past life and does not believe my intentions are honourable. Madame, let me see her and plead my cause?"

"It is impossible."

"Of course you take part against me," cried Victor, angrily; "such places as these flourish on disappointed love."

"You wrong us, monsieur," said the Mother, stiffly. "We gain nothing by Miss Browne's refusing you. She is a heretic, and not even of our faith. If she joined the true Church and became your wife we should find a powerful friend in her."

There was common sense in this. Victor felt bewildered.

"Why is she so obstinate. She looked a yielding girl. Why does she withhold my love?"

"She has, I think, a past attachment," said Mother Marie. "I believe she had a love affair in England."

"And the man deserted her. I'd like to have the punishing of him."

The nun shook her head.

"There was no question of desertion. They were not even engaged. He married some one else."

Victor left the convent, and the next day there arrived a letter for Miss Browne, enclosed open in one to the mother.

"I leave you for a time, but I shall return. I won't believe that my love is all in vain. If I am willing to forget that you are a foreigner and a heretic, surely my affection must in time win yours. You will find that the convent is not heaven. You are no saint, but a delicate, clinging woman. In time you will long for love and regret the heart you have despised—until then I will wait."

"The Baron has gone to England," the mother told Lettice. "He will visit his relations, and make a tour through Britain; it will be some months before he returns."

"And meanwhile I may stay here!"

"And welcome," replied the nun. She was but human. She knew she might have got other English teachers for sixteen pounds a year, but she knew also that Victor de Monory was likely to be a powerful patron to the convent which sheltered the girl he loved. Mother Marie believed that time would conquer Lettice's scruples, and that when Victor returned she would be able to present to him not only a willing *femme* but a true daughter of Holy Church.

There was nothing controversial or bigoted about Lettice. Her religion had few formalities. It was part of herself. She did not mind attending the services of the convent chapel. She knew that many of the prayers and hymns were used in her own Church. She liked to hear the clear, sweet voices of the girl choir, and to listen to the clever sermons of the "Directeur." There was very much that she could join in, and the rest, the part that she could not understand, she simply did not hear.

The books that the mother lent her, made very little impression on her. She did not know enough of controversialism to be able to value them, and after six months at the Convent she was no nearer "abjuring her errors," perhaps because she was not in the least sure that she had any errors to abjure; perhaps because, even now, she had not grasped what the chief points of difference between the Roman Church and her own really were.

"I am quite content with my own faith," she told the mother once quietly, "and I cannot see why people argue so hotly about religion. There must be room for all kinds."

"My dear daughter, that is a most dangerous sentiment," said Mother Marie; but all the same, she did not despair, and Lettice was admitted into the choir, where her clear, bell-like notes were a great acquisition.

Madame de Monory came to spend Christmas at the Castle. She, proud woman, took no notice of her former *protégée*, but kind Bridget Mills came up to the Convent and was allowed to spend a whole afternoon with Lettice in her tiny cell-like apartment.

"And you wouldn't have Monsieur Victor after all," she observed, in surprise. "You'll never guess the piece of work there's been about it."

"I am very sorry. It must have seemed a poor return to Madame de Monory for her kindness that I should inveigle her son into an attachment she would think so far beneath him. But, dear Bridget, it was not my fault."

"I wish enough you could hate him. Missie, a wife he loved might be the making of him yet."

"But a wife who did not love him would only spoil his life," said Lettice. "If I had cared for Monsieur Victor in the right way, I would not have let a heretic in religion part us."

She did not say anything about the difference in rank. Bridget noticed the omission; it confirmed an idea which had been floating in her

mind for some time—little Miss Browne was a great lady.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SIR JOHN NORTH found his task far more difficult than he had expected.

First of all he was attacked by influenza. The first week he spent in Paris, the terrible fiend took a severe grip of him, and held him captive for some time. Then he went about too soon, and had a relapse. Easter was long past, and Jack had been a widower six months before he could attempt any real search for his cousin.

Antoine, who had returned to his service, nursed him with the most affectionate devotion, and was almost beside himself with joy when Sir John was declared cured.

The valet was in his master's confidence. Jack knew that he could trust Antoine fully, and the man's intimate knowledge of Paris and its inner life (so different to the superficial acquaintance which English people may acquire in a few brief visits) made Jack hope a great deal from his help. They felt the first point gained when Antoine unearthed Captain Peyton. That gentleman, as plausible and affable as ever, was pursuing his old game, only Dora was no longer with him. His fortunes had fallen so low he had been thankful to accept his brother's offer to take charge of her for a time. Dora was probably as great a trial to the prim Calvinistic Scotch household as its strict ways and lack of amusement were to her. Her father missed her, but found it much cheaper not to keep up an establishment of his own. No one exactly knew where the Captain slept, or how he passed his mornings, but from two o'clock till long past midnight he was generally to be found at a low-class gambling club, which was always in danger of being suppressed by the authorities, and always managed just to escape.

Antoine, by dint of losing several small sums to the Captain, soon stood high in his favour, and was able to lure him to his master's hotel without much difficulty.

"A gentleman, a compatriot of my own, anxious to see me," said the Captain. "I suppose, my good friend, you are sure it is not a creditor? In the present state of my affairs, money is so scarce that I have no desire to meet anyone I owe it to."

"I am quite certain my master is not a creditor of yours. He is very rich, and has come to France on private business, quite unconnected with debts."

Captain Peyton had another alarm.

"You don't think he's a friend of any of the young nobodies I've tried to teach *daub*."

"I think he wants to ask you a few questions about a lady. He'll pay you handsomely if you give him the information he requires, and at the worst he said I could promise you a five pound note for your loss of time."

"Five pounds for a single visit. I should like to sell my society always at the same price."

Brandy and soda, whisky, seltzer and other refreshments stood on a tray when Captain Peyton was ushered into Sir John's private sitting-room. The gambler gave a sigh of relief as he looked at his host. They had never met before, of that he was certain.

Jack went to the point at once.

"I have reason to believe that some time ago—probably sixteen months—you were living with your daughter at Fulham, and while there you engaged as companion a young lady called Browne."

"Right, sir. We brought Miss Browne over to Paris with us; I remember thinking she seemed above her position."

"She is my cousin," said Sir John, "and the heiress of a large fortune. Give me her address, Captain Peyton, and I'll write you a cheque in three figures."

"I wish to Heaven I could."

"You mean that she has left you, but surely she gave you some clue to her future home, unless, of course, you parted on bad terms."

"Never had a wry word with her, good little girl. But she didn't stay with us a month."

"Surely you know where she went? You probably gave her a reference."

"I know where she went, but you won't find her there now, and as for references they don't ask for such things at hospitals."

Sir John turned deadly white.

"You mean that she was ill, and you turned her into the street!"

"Nothing of the sort, sir. She met with a terrible accident, and nothing but the best of nursing, the ablest surgical skill, could have saved her life. If she had stayed with us (I am a poor man, Sir John), she must have died: at the hospital there was just a chance of her recovery. Dora and I had to leave Paris before she was out of danger, but the last I heard of her she was progressing favourably."

"And that was?"

"More than a year ago. I'll give you the name of the hospital, Sir John, but it stands to reason she won't be there now."

Captain Peyton received his five pounds, and did not in the least understand why Sir John's manner was so cuttingly sarcastic.

It was too late to go to the hospital that night. In the morning Jack called, a liberal donation in his pocket for the institution to which Lettice owed either her restoration to life and health, or kindly attendance in her last hours. He never knew quite how much his only hope was set on finding his cousin till the sister told him the blessed news of her recovery.

She left him to go to the house of one of our most charitable ladies, Madame de Monory. Monsieur may have heard of her, she agreed to receive Miss Browne as a guest, and when she was strong enough, find her another situation.

Alas! Sir John's efforts received a check. Directed from the hotel in the Faubourg St. Honoré to Madame's new *étagé*, he found that she was in retreat; for three weeks it would be impossible for her to attend to any business.

Punctually at the expiration of the time, Jack returned, but fresh disappointment awaited him; Madame positively refused him an audience.

Jack tried a golden key. Slipping a sovereign into the porter's hand he asked if there was any servant who had been with Madame the previous year, and would be likely to remember a young lady who was her guest in the spring.

He was soon shown into the presence of Bridget Mills, and the kindly creature told him the news his heart hungered for.

"You'll find her at the Convent at Pont-aux-Dames, sir, and I reckon it's a good thing you didn't wait any longer, for the nuns have set their heads on converting her and keeping her as one of themselves, and being so alone in the world, with no home, maybe she'd have given in."

When Jack reached Pont-aux-Dames he had the most wonderful feeling that he had been there before. When he rang at the convent gate, slowly it all came back to him: the strange dream in which he had assisted at the profession of a novice—a novice with eyes and face like Lettice's.

"Heaven grant I am not too late," he breathed. "It would indeed be a cruel mockery of all my hopes if I found her a professed nun."

But that dream had shadowed forth a warning of what might be, not a picture of what was. "Miss Browne" was still the English teacher, still a heretic, though the Mother had great hopes of soon bringing her over to the true faith.

"You will tell Lettice," said Jack to this lady, in his best French, "that her kinsman has come from England to see her, I am sure she will not refuse."

"Are you really her kinsman?" demanded the Mother. "I understood she had no near relations?"

"I am her cousin, and I am also in some sort her guardian. Madame, I beg you to let me see her."

He waited in the little reception-room some five minutes, and there came to him a girl dressed in the plain black serge and white cap, which was the uniform of the convent. But when he looked at her he knew that it was Lettice, Lettice grown ten times prettier than she had ever been at the Croft.

"Are you staying in Paris?" she asked, gently. "Why did you not bring Julia?"

"Evidently, dear, newspapers don't penetrate here, or you would know that Julia is Mrs. Denis Fane, and busily engaged in presiding over her husband's house at Ashleigh."

"Oh, Jack!"

"Now, don't pity me, Lettice, for I never was so glad of any wedding as of theirs. It made Jill happy, and it gave me the means of convincing you that you had made a great mistake."

"My dear, you were doubly deceived; wilfully by Aunt Susan, innocently by Jill. You thought Jill unkind, didn't you. Well, it seems she was desperately jealous of your old intimacy with Denis Fane, and fancied you were her rival in his love. She has fretted terribly over your absence Lettice, and now the one question is, when will you come home?"

"But I gave the Croft to you."

"And I absolutely refuse to take it—except on one condition."

"And what is that?"

"That the giver goes with the gift. Lettice, I love you dearly. I have loved you in my heart, I believe, ever since you came to the Croft."

"I never guessed it."

"I never knew it myself until you went away. And Lettice, in those days I could not have told you of my love. I was bound and fettered. The wife I had married as a mere boy still lived, and though she was hopelessly insane I could put no other woman in her place. She died last November, Lettice, and if only you are willing you can be my wife as truly as you have long been my love."

There was a long explanation between the Mother Superior and Sir John. Then Mrs. Carlton, who had never forgotten her love for Lettice, came over to France and journeyed to Pont-aux-Dames, for no other reason than to receive Miss Dene at the Mother's hands, and herself escort her to England, for the convent would have been horrified at the bare idea of her making the journey under no other guardianship than her lover's.

July had well begun before Mrs. Carlton reached home, and then her husband took a furnished house at the sea-side for his family, and it was tacitly agreed that Lettice should stay with them until she became Lady North. Jack pleaded for an early marriage, but Lettice wished to wait till a full year after the death of poor Isabel.

"We have our whole lives to spend together, dear," she told her lover when he waxed impatient. "And she only had you really for one short year. I cannot bear that we should seem to slight her memory."

They were married in Christmas week. Mr. Carlton gave away the bride. Denis Fane was among the guests. His wife would certainly have been with him only the young couple's son and heir had chosen to enter the world just a week before and required his mother's personal attendance.

Sir John and Lady North reign right royally at the Croft, where Julia and her Denis are frequent visitors. Mrs. Seaton comes down every summer, and there, too, Mrs. Thurston and her children have been welcomed. Alick Jameson has received the grateful thanks of Lettice's husband, and Madame de Monory has quite forgiven the girl her son wished to marry, in fact, as Victor shortly afterwards bestowed his name on a third-rate *danses*, the great lady thinks, on the whole, it is a pity that Lettice refused him.

[THE END.]

MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS frequently find butterflies frozen on the snow, and so brittle that they break unless carefully handled. When thawed the butterflies recover and fly away.

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MARK VAVASOUR'S TRIAL.

—30—

(Continued from page 320.)

"Dear madam, it shall be as you wish, only remain quiet now; and Heaven grant, if this girl is as good as she is lovely, she may, indeed, be your child. Good-night, and all happiness be with you!"

It was a dull morning when Juliet found her way to the Princess Bronislava's bijou house. She entered, not without some trepidation, and wondering greatly what the lady could have in common with her. There stirred, too, in her heart a faint hope that she was to learn something of her mysterious parentage.

She was escorted to an elegant boudoir, where, surrounded by every luxury, lay a lovely lady with a most sad but expectant face. Juliet bowed, and the Princess motioned her to a seat beside her couch.

"Are you Bertha Donaval?" she asked, gently, and Juliet noticed that her thin hands fluttered excitedly from throat to breast.

"No, madam," she answered, quietly; "but I performed in her stead last evening. My name is Juliet Conway."

The Princess half-rose, stretched out her hands with a mute, imploring gesture, then controlled herself sufficiently to say,

"Are your parents alive?"

"I do not know," Juliet answered, flushing hotly. "I am ignorant of my origin. Pray pardon me if I beg you not to approach the subject. It is a very painful one to me," and the proud lip quivered with mortification.

"Naturally, child; but if I said I could tell you all you wish to know, if I proved that I sit down, and disclose what you can of your past."

"Oh!" the girl cried, "do not excite vain hopes in my heart; do not teach me to believe myself of honourable birth, only to let me learn afterwards I am the miserable dupe of some deception."

"Trust me, I shall not do that," and impelled by her manner to obey her, Juliet told the princess all she knew of her antecedents. Once or twice the lady interrupted with sound that was suspiciously like a sob, and when the girl had finished she lay silent a time.

"Oh, by all your womanliness, do not keep me in suspense," the girl pleads.

Then the worn but lovely face was turned upon her with a look she could not fathom.

"Listen patiently," she said, and her voice, though broken, was full of a great, deep joy. "From the moment I saw you I felt you were my—I mean the girl I sought. You look amazed. Give me your hand, child; and now—now hear me. Your mother was a Polish lady of rank, and she married—(much against her friends' wishes)—a young Englishman, at that time attached to the Polish Court; in fact, so prejudiced against the match were her parents that she eloped with her lover, and was married secretly. He was poor, but a gentleman, and his name was Norbert Conway. He had no living relatives. The young couple were very happy, despite their comparative poverty; and the wife did not grieve overmuch when news came of her mother's death, because another blessing had crowned her life—the advent of a girl-baby.

"Norbert Conway"—how tenderly she lingered over the name!—obtained employment as a secretary to a nobleman at Marseilles, and all went well with the little family until the husband was stricken down with cholera, and died. The unhappy young widow almost lost her reason, and for a long time lay ill upon her bed. Then her father went to her, and proposed that she should return with him to her old home.

"At first she resisted; but when she asked for her child, and they told her it had died in its father's death, she struggled no more, but returned to her friends a broken-hearted, apathetic woman.

"It soon transpired that her father intended using her to gratify his own ambition—he did

all in his power to compass a marriage between her and an old suitor whom she hated with all the force of her nature. She was so persistent in her refusal to listen to him that his love turned to hate, and he vowed to be revenged upon her and her family.

"Her father was a member of a secret society, and he contrived to have him arrested on the charge of conspiracy. He brought proofs of his statement, and the result was that Humbert Bronislava was condemned to twelve years' imprisonment.

"He was so bitter against his unhappy daughter that through all those twelve years he refused to see her; but when he was set at liberty he was so frail, so desolate that he was glad to have her companionship, so they travelled to France where they lived for twelve months.

"Then he fell ill, and, knowing the end was near, could not die with the secret of thirteen years on his soul; so he called his daughter to him, and confessed the great wrong he had done her. How, hoping to teach her forgetfulness of Norbert Conway, he had taken away her child, and placed her at a school at Colchester. That for five years he had paid for her education and maintenance; but that when he was thrown into prison for his daughter's fault (as he chose to consider it) he swore to do no more for the child whose name he hated, and never to disclose that she yet lived.

"After that confession he died, and having buried him Dries Conway came to England to find her child. She went at once to the school where you had been placed; but it was closed, the principal dead, Juliet Conway had left. You were traced to Rochester; then all further clue was lost, and it is only by a great Providence I saw you last night."

Her eyes shone through a mist of tears, her breath came fast. Juliet fell on her knees beside her.

"Tell me," she implored, agitatedly, "who are you?"

The Princess broke into joyful sobs. "I am Dries Bronislava, Norbert Conway's widow, and your mother. Child!—oh, my child! Is not your heart moved towards me? Love me a little, if but for the sake of my long suffering! Kiss me! Ah! how I have hungered for this hour!"

Juliet lifted her head.

"Leave me to myself a moment. It seems this great good news is not for me, that I should stand unblushing before the world." Then with sudden passion, "Oh, mother! mother! mother! hold my hand in yours, touch me that I may know it is not a dream."

She bent suddenly and kissed her mother's cheek.

"Oh, you have suffered," she said, with passionate pity. "Your pain has far exceeded mine; but I will try to recompense you for all that."

Then they wept together for very joy; but when they were calmer the girl said, flashing deeply,—

"Let me tell you all that has happened since I left Colchester. You ought to know. Perhaps others will tell you."

And she proceeded to tell of her persecutions at Bath, until the mother caught her close, laughing and crying over her long-lost treasure, and speaking in fierce indignation of those who had made Juliet's life such a burden to be borne.

"But," she added, "who is this Mark Vavasour of whom you speak? Ah, child! child, have you already given your heart? Then, indeed, I have found you but to lose you again!"

"No, no!" growing pale again. "I have more to tell you. When I arrived at the Washingtons I thought it only right to acquaint my employer with the mystery that surrounded me. She heard me patiently and even kindly, and never referred to the subject until the night before I left Rochester. Some time previous to my dying so Mark Vavasour, a gentleman of birth and fortune, came to visit Mrs. Washington, who was anxious to secure him for her sister. But from

the first he paid court to me, and I was foolish enough to be glad, and oh! mother, the shame of it.

"I learned to love him, and was mad enough to think that he loved me. By every means in his power he strove to win my heart. I was so young and credulous that I believed him implicitly, and gave myself up to the happiness which was so great that at times I could scarcely distinguish it from pain. Then there came a day when we wandered about the gardens together, and Mark kissed me. We neither spoke a word, but I clung about him, and he could but know I loved him. We were startled by one of Mrs. Washington's visitors, and parted hurriedly; I going into the house, and to my room.

"I did not go down again until that night, when Mrs. Washington summoned me to the library. By the change in her face I know something unpleasant had occurred. She did not leave me long in suspense as to the nature of my trouble. She said she had seen with great pain my efforts to entangle Mr. Vavasour. She regretted that he should have acted foolishly and inconsiderately; the more so, that on the previous day he had proposed to her sister and been accepted; that impressed with a sense of his own folly he had confided in her, and the result was that he had left the house for a time; and she must request me to do the same, as she could no longer retain the services of one so imprudent as I."

"Half broken-hearted I received a quarter's salary in lieu of a quarter's notice, and started the next day for Bath, where life went on evenly enough until I became acquainted with the Dimsdales. Last July I saw Mark driving in the park with them. He did not acknowledge me then, but afterwards he sought me out, and spoke very harshly of my previous conduct, casting all the blame upon me."

"Did he marry the other woman, my dearest?"

"No; it was rumoured that he would marry Rana Dimsdale. Mrs. Washington's sister died shortly after I left her."

"And are you sure you did well to accept Mrs. Washington's statement?"

"It must have been true, mother; Mark Vavasour left the house without seeing me or writing a message. Let us forget him, and be happy in our new life. Oh, kiss me again, that I may realise my joy;" she clung to her mother, then with sudden passion,

"You are very beautiful," she said, softly. "I love to look into your face."

Society papers were full of Juliet Conway's romantic history, and it was predicted by folks who had seen her that the long-lost daughter of Princess Dries Bronislava (for she continued to be known by her maiden name) would be a great success.

Mark Vavasour heard the news with very mingled feelings; he would probably meet the woman who was dear to him as in long-ago days. He must smile in her presence, and hide whatever pain he might feel.

"It is hard to reflect on her folly," he thought, "I wonder if her mother knows anything of her past? Juliet! Juliet! how happy we might have been!"

The news of her great, good fortune travelled down to Bath, and the kindly Mrs. Addison rejoiced, whilst her son wished heartily he had been little more tolerant to his mother's lovely and distinguished lodger.

The former received a very substantial token of Juliet's gratitude, which she was extremely proud of showing to any and every visitor as "a present from Miss Juliet, the loveliest of ladies, and daughter to a Princess with an outlandish name."

One night Mark met the Dimsdales at the house of a mutual friend, and could not but observe the change in Rana. She looked worn and anxious and showed her preference for him so openly that he felt somewhat disgusted, and seizing an early opportunity left her, and went into the conservatory.

He soon lost himself in thought, and was totally unconscious that Greville and his sister

had entered and taken a seat close by him, he being well screened from view by gorgeous tropical plants. He was roused at last by hearing Juliet Conway's name spoken in Rana's voice, sharp and angry.

"Don't speak to me of Juliet Conway again, Greville. That girl has been the curse of my existence!"

Not wishing to hear more, Mark half rose, when some words of Greville arrested his attention.

"You were sure that your plots against her would succeed, that eventually I should win my wife; but it seems to me that if we had been straightforward in our dealings with Vavasour and Juliet, we should have been happier than now. We took away her fair name, and yet she was too proud to shelter herself under mine. Now she can afford to laugh at my advances, and punish me for my insolence."

"Is not my lot harder than yours? Look incredulous if you will; it is I who have toiled early and late to win Mark Vavasour's love, I who have plotted and planned until my heart and brain are both weary, and with what success you know!"

Mark stepped forward, his face curiously distorted, and seeing him Rana uttered a low, sharp cry, whilst Greville confronted him moodily.

"What have you heard?" he questioned, whilst his sister hid her eyes.

"Enough to make me believe there has been some plot against Miss Conway's peace and reputation. You must speak out now, Dimsdale, or I'll make you!" There was brooding menace on his face and in his voice.

"There is no need for force," Greville retorted, swiftly. "I am glad to confess my share in the matter, and can only beg you to be merciful to my sister; as for me, I deserve to be whipped like a hound. I loved the girl, I would have married her, but she would not listen to me. I was furiously jealous of you, and did my best to poison your mind against her, to teach the worthy people of Bath to think lightly of her, hoping that when she found herself alone and in poverty she would instinctively turn to me. Listen a few minutes, and I will tell you all," and he went on to relate the plot against Juliet, and how skilfully it had been carried out.

And Rana only crouched lower and lower, feeling Mark's eyes, terrible with anger, were upon her. When Greville ceased, however, she lifted her head defiantly.

"I am more to blame than he. I planned all. I did more by fiances and glances in a month than a man could do in a year." She broke off suddenly, and grasped her skirts with both hands as though she feared to lose her self-control.

"Tell me why you did this thing!" Mark asked, stormily.

"Because I loved you. Oh! do not start as if surprised; you guessed it long ago, and if there were any hope of winning your affection I would stick at nothing. But lies are useless, so I tell you the plain, unvarnished truth. It sounds ugly, does it not?" and she laughed recklessly.

"Now, what will you do in the matter?"

"You," said Mark, contemptuously, "I spare, because of your sex; and as for you, Greville Dimsdale, you were once my friend, and so, although you have probably spoiled my life, I will take no such revenge as a man might well do in my case."

He turned away; Greville held out his hand.

"Will you shake hands, Vavasour?"

"You ask too much," coldly. "I am not quite so easily appeased."

"I know I should not expect it, and yet I should have been glad. Understand, you are at liberty to make what use you choose of my confession, but spare Rana!"

"I will do so as far as I can."

He moved towards the entrance of the conservatory; there the wretched woman stayed him by a gesture.

"You will go to the girl you love, and whose truth you doubted; whom you were too proud to marry when she was lowly, and may she show you the mercy your folly and pride deserve. Good-bye, you carry my best wishes with you."

Then she sank upon the seat and sobbed. "I love him. Oh! feel that I am, I love him!"

Juliet sat alone in her boudoir, an open letter in her hand. Prosperity seemed to have developed all the good qualities in her, which adversity had threatened to kill or dwarf. Her manner was gentler, more gracious than in the old days at Bath; the line of her lips less scornful, the expression of her eyes less severe.

Already between mother and daughter there was perfect confidence and sympathy, and it seemed the happiness of her latter days would atone to the Princess for the misery of her early life.

It was a bright April morning, and the sun shone in through the open windows of the boudoir which mother-love had made so beautiful; the hangings were of palest pink and silver; costly chintz, glittering lusters, and choice flowers made it appear like a scene from fairy-land, and yet its owner sat in the midst of all this luxury and beauty with sad face, and tearful, longing eyes.

The letter she held was closely written and covered two sheets of creamy paper. It was in a man's handwriting, and Juliet's heart throbbed passionately as she read and re-read the words Mark had written.

It was an informal epistle, but instinctively she knew what made it so, and forgave him all his wrong even before she had concluded her perusal.

"There was a time when I misjudged you sorely, and believed implicitly the idle tales I heard; I told myself then that you were utterly false and undeserving the love of any true man. I endeavoured to suppress my passion for you, but vainly, and meeting you at Sydney Gardens a power that was stronger than I compelled me to address you. I will not rehearse what followed, but your words led me to believe you boasted of what I thought your shame. Some of your sayings were incomprehensible to me then, as they are now, but I have learned, too late, how mad I was, and how injured you were."

"I have debated in my own mind for several days if it were wise to address you, to recall myself in any way to your memory, and have arrived at the conclusion that it is my duty to acquaint you with facts that have recently come to my knowledge.

"Knowing your nature better now than in those dead days, for which I now long vainly, I am assured you will not use my words for any purpose of revenge. Those who poisoned my mind and hardened my heart against you were Rana and Greville Dimsdale, for their own vile ends. Accidentally I discovered this; and perhaps, it will make you happier to know that the world in which you moved now accepts you for what you were and are; looks on you as a martyr in those days.

"Now let me confess my sin against you. Recall for a moment that July night at Rochester, when I kissed you for the first time. I entered the house, you will remember, alone, and was met by Mrs. Washington, who freely confessed she had seen us in the garden, and deplored what she termed my imprudence. I retorted hotly, but she bore with me with what I now think suspicious patience; and when I had ended told me quietly enough that she could not allow me to ruin myself whilst under her roof; that you were a foundling, and had lived many years by charity.

"She was a keen woman, and had discovered my greatest failing, which was an immense regard for good birth.

"For a few hours I recollect from the thought of marriage with you, and left the house determining to return in a few days, when I had resolved on my course of conduct. In those few days I learned how much you were to me, and to ignore the facts of your birth. I returned to Rochester to make you my wife, but you had left, Mrs. Washington said, the morning following my departure, and there was a report that you did not go alone.

"I have no more to say. I do not wish to

extenuate my conduct. I feel it is beyond defence; but I would to Heaven you were once again the poor and unknown governess that I might woo you in wiser and nobler fashion than before. Forgive me if you can, and pity me because I have laid waste my whole life by my mad folly and cruelty.

"MARK."

Juliet looked up with tender eyes.

"He loves me still!" she murmured, "and is not that fact all sufficient to teach me forgiveness? Oh! Mark, my dear! my dear! only try me; see if I will fall in love or faith!"

They met at last at a brilliant ball, and the hostess led Mark to the beauty of the evening. She was called away suddenly, and did not notice his confusion or the swift blush on Juliet's face, the glad light of love in her eyes.

"Won't you speak to me, Mark?" she questioned, in a low voice.

His face was livid with suppressed passion; his tones hoarse when he answered, heavily,—

"What can I say to you? I cannot hope for forgiveness, and of love I dare not think. Come on to the balcony, and let me make my peace."

They went out together.

"Tell me," he said, looking down upon her lovely face, with eyes of hungering love, "in the future will you learn to think less harshly of me?"

"I have not one bitter thought or angry feeling in my heart," she whispered, swiftly.

Then, as he took her hand, her head drooped low.

"Mark, do you love me still?"

"More than life. But of what use is my love?" bitterly. "Don't torture me."

"If I said I loved you, Mark, and could only be happy with you; if I said I would give up all for your sake, and—and—and—oh! Mark, don't you see?" half sobbing.

"My darling! my wife!" he cried, and caught her close.

There was a long silence; then Juliet lifted her face, and said, as she caressed his cheek with one hand,—

"You silly, silly boy! why did you not trust me more? You should have known that a woman loving once loves always. Listen a moment, my dearest,—

"Oh! leave me not, I love but thee, blessing or curse, which e'er be to me. Oh! be as thou hast been to me For ever and for ever."

Graville Dimsdale sailed for America the following month, and Rana withdrew from the world she once had loved. But Mark and his wife have settled down to a life of love, which Juliet says will last beyond the grave—for ever and for ever!

[THE END]

It would be difficult to estimate precisely the total weight of gold in the Vatican, but it is safe to say that there are at least thirty tons of it, worth in the neighbourhood of £4,000,000 at the present market price of the unwrought metal. Of this huge amount of gold there is probably not a single pound of the metal that remains in its virgin state. Nearly every ounce of it has passed through the hands of skilled artisans, who have worked it into countless forms, thus adding perhaps a third or a quarter more to its value. Nor does the alloy that is usually employed by the goldsmith to give a durable quality to objects made of the precious metal enter at all into the composition of the treasures of the Vatican, which, being almost entirely votive offerings to the Sovereign Pontiff, are literally of solid gold.

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THE SECRET OF THE MINE.

—30—

CHAPTER LXII.

WHEN Harold Travers reached the prison, to his great surprise he saw the very object of his search hurrying down the steps, surrounded by a crowd of friends.

"Harold, old boy, congratulate me!" he cried, "I have just been released. I was arrested for murder, but the man did not die, and it was well for me. He will recover, and he refuses to prosecute me."

Harold shook his hand warmly.

"You have my most hearty congratulations, Bertie," he said, heartily. "No one is more pleased than I am at the way matters have turned out. Come home with me at once."

"I would be more than glad to do so!" exclaimed Bertie, "but to tell you the truth, I am bound for a long trip—out to America."

"Why, is it possible? So am I going there, too. How fortunate that your business should take you out there just now!"

"It is not business, it is pleasure that takes me there," replied the young man, with a blush.

Excusing himself to the friends that had clustered about him, Bertie accepted the offer of Harold to accompany him home, as he was obliged to see his uncle before his departure.

On the way young Howard startled Harold with the intelligence that he was married.

"Why, how secretly you have kept it, you silly dog! Then we are to have a lady travelling with us! That is much better than I had hoped for."

"No," said Bertie; "she is not here; she is out in the wilds of America. I am going out to where she is."

"And her name?" exclaimed Bertie. "Do I know her? I think I remember pretty nearly all your old flames."

"Not this one," replied Bertie. "Her name before marriage was Norah Connor, and a sweeter, dearer, fairer girl—"

"By Jove!" interposed Harold, with a whistle of the most profound dismay, "you don't mean little Norah, the sister of Denis Connor, do you?"

"Yes; she certainly has a brother, Denis Connor," replied Bertie.

"Great Scott!" cried Harold, enthusiastically, "this is as good as the closing act of a play, or a chapter out of a novel. Why, I know Denis Connor well, and I have met his shy, sweet little sister. Why, I was half in love with her myself. You don't tell me you are married to her, do you? It is to see her brother that I am taking this trip out to America."

It was now Bertie's turn to be very much surprised.

"It is, indeed, most remarkable!" he declared.

"Bertie's restlessness to set sail was, indeed, pitiful to see. This was also the case with Wilfrid Stanford. He had taken every precaution to keep his story out of the papers for the present, and in this he was successful.

Very few people would have dreamed on board that the white-haired old gentleman with the long white beard reaching far down his breast was the great Wilfrid Stanford, the once famous silver king of Western America, the story of whose fabulous wealth almost everyone was familiar with.

At last they were in the train for Westboro', and Mr. Stanford's eyes brightened with feverish intensity as mile after mile was traversed. He would not go direct to Castle Royal.

"I could not bear to see the place," he said, his hands shaky, his voice trembling and husky with deep emotion.

Besides, he knew how greatly it would startle the old servants. He remembered that Mrs. Peters owned a little cottage near Castle Royal, and he thought that she must be living in the cottage. She had always said that she would go back there if Pauline married.

Leaving his two companions, Bertie Howard and Harold Travers, to search up their friends,

he bent his footsteps at once in the direction of Mrs. Peters' cottage.

A tidy little serving-maid answered the bell. He had seen her before—she had been employed at Castle Royal—but she did not know him.

She curtseied, and asked whom he wished to see.

"I should like to see Mrs. Peters if she is in," he said.

"Please step in, sir," said the maid, placing a seat for him in the neat little parlour to the right of the hall.

"There is a very old gentleman downstairs who wishes to see you as soon as possible," the maid said to her mistress, who was sewing in her pleasant little sitting-room.

"Did he hand you no card?" asked the lady.

"Oh, I forgot to ask him for one. You know that we are not near as stylish as we were in Castle Royal, and I forgot to be as stylish in this little bit of a house."

"Annie," exclaimed her mistress, severely, "you should never give your opinion unsought—remember that!"

"You know I didn't mean anything," returned the girl, quickly; "but it seems to me as though I shall never get over leaving Castle Royal, I liked it so well."

"Tell the gentleman I will be down directly. Stay—you know who he is?"

"No, ma'am, I do not. I have never seen him before," returned Annie, "but somehow I could not help thinking that I had heard a voice like his before. I should say he is a stranger in the village. But when I told him to walk right into the parlour, without waiting for me to lead the way, he strode on ahead and opened the door."

"Well, well!" said Mrs. Peters. "I cannot imagine who it can be that knows the house—unless it is one of the trustees of the village, who has come to consult me regarding what further steps they shall take to secure a clue to my poor niece Pauline's whereabouts."

"Oh, I do wish that they would find her, ma'am!" said Annie, commencing to sob. "I have never known a happy day since our dear young lady married that man and went away from Westboro'. I'd go on my hands and knees to find her."

"Help me to fasten this collar," said Mrs. Peters. "Somehow, I feel just as nervous as a young girl who is expecting a lover; I have had so many shocks, that I do not know what to expect next. An old woman like myself cannot stand shocks like a young woman can."

She descended to the parlour, and a moment later the girl was startled by a terrified scream, which brought her at once to her mistress's side. She found her in a state of the greatest agitation.

"Annie," she said, "the dead has come back to life again! See! this is Pauline's father, and you did not know him!"

It was some little time ere she could control herself sufficiently to talk to him. She told him of the rumour of Pauline's return to Montana. That the train people had seen a slim little figure, heavily veiled, alight at the station; but from that moment she had disappeared as completely as though the earth had swallowed her, although searching parties had been organised under the direction of Mr. Denis Connor, the young secretary.

Every nook and cranny for a hundred miles around Westboro' had been scoured without avail.

Wilfrid Stanford listened with bowed head.

"I will never give up the search until I find Pauline, dead or alive!"

Mrs. Peters laid a hand on his arm.

"Take young Connor with you in your search," she said, in a low voice.

"Why should I do that?" he answered. "I—"

"Let me tell you why," she interposed, softly. "Denis Connor loves Pauline. He would go through fire and water—ay, risk his very life—to find her and place her in your arms. He is almost insane over her loss."

Mr. Stanford's lips trembled. He did not tell Mrs. Peters that the one longing of his heart would have been realised had his daughter but

married the young secretary who had saved his life on the night of that never-to-be-forgotten riot.

"I will go and see him at once," he said, rising abruptly.

"Nay," she answered; "be seated, I am expecting him here every moment."

At that self-same instant, Denis Connor was in earnest consultation with his friend Harold Travers. It was the first moment that he found himself alone with his friend.

"You say you have something besides Bertie Howard's release to tell me about?"

"Yes," replied Harold, hoarsely; "but I scarcely know how to begin, for something tells me that you love the beautiful girl whom death has set free from Maurice Fairfax."

"Why should I hide the truth from you, my old friend?" responded Denis. "Yes, I love her, and—she loves me. If I find her, she will in time be my wife."

"This makes my task all the harder," repeated Harold. "Swear to me that you will listen to what I say without comment until I have finished, and I will begin my story."

"That promise I can readily give," replied Denis.

"No matter how great your emotion is!"

"No matter how great it is!" repeated Denis, wondering.

They shook hands over this compact, and Harold began his story slowly and huskily.

He told Denis of his memorable trip through Westboro', only a year before, with his uncle; how he had seen Pauline Stanford, and admired her; of the effect it had produced upon his uncle when he had told him that he had fallen in love with Pauline, and that he intended to come back to Westboro' and woo and win her if he could.

"Never," he cried, "with my consent. I would sooner see you dead than married to that girl. I grant you, she is as sweet and beautiful as a flower. Let me tell you why, Harold, and then you will not wonder at my emotion. I will relate to you the history of the Stanfords, and you shall judge whether you dare love her."

"And this is the story he had to tell—"

"Many years ago he had been a partner of Wilfrid Stanford in this very town of Westboro'. As young men they were very fond of each other. One had no secret which was not known to the other,

"Suddenly, one day Wilfrid Stanford rushed into the office, holding out his hand, and crying out to my uncle,—"

"Congratulate me, old boy; I am married!"

"My uncle could scarcely credit his own senses, for he knew positively that up to that day Wilfrid Stanford had never had a sweet-heart. He had often said so himself.

"No wonder you are surprised," he began. "Well, the truth is, I met my wife for the first time an hour ago, and married her within the hour."

"Married a perfect stranger!" cried my uncle, in amazement. "Oh, Wilfrid, was that wise!"

"I will have to take my chances on that," he declared, laughingly.

"But from that very day a great change seemed to come over the bridegroom, though before the outside world he forced himself to be as gay and bright as he had been before.

"The honeymoon was over, Stanford's wife tried one night to take his life. My uncle, who was at Castle Royal that night, rushed in just in time to prevent her, and then and there was revealed to him the terrible story until now hidden from the outside world."

CHAPTER LXIII.

"My uncle was just in time," continued Harold, "to save Stanford's life that night. His bride had attempted to—to murder him. She was insane. He kept it from the world as only a proud man would have done, and his heart broke when he discovered that it was because she had been parted from a lover whom she had cared for,

and that her lover had been seen in Westboro', and within the very grounds of Castle Royal, that very day. That was the story Wilfrid Stanford told him. Maida watched her in secret, day and night, from that hour, until Pauline was born. She was never alone.

"The very hour that the little one saw the light, she cursed him, and it made him tremble to hear it.

"A few weeks later he took her away for a trip that would benefit her health and the child's, intending to purchase all that money could provide, if relief could be had.

"They went abroad and soon after they reached England, one night she escaped from his watchful care, leaving a note saying that she intended to drown herself.

"A body was found at the spot she indicated, disfigured beyond recognition by the action of the waves. The body of the nurse known to have been with her on that particular night was never discovered. The body of the unfortunate lady was brought back to Castle Royal and interred there.

"It was said by the superstitious people about, even by those who did not know her history, that the poor lady's spirit haunted the hall and a spiral stairway that led from it to the silver king's and little Pauline's suite of rooms.

"The fear of the servants became so great that this part of the house was walled up, and no one save Pauline was brave enough to thread those dusty passages or the narrow spiral stairs. Now that you know all, I have nothing more to add," said Harold Travers. "I have come across to this country to tell you this story, and I have brought Wilfrid Stanford back with me to vouch for it!"

Before the amazed man who listened could find breath to articulate one word, the remarkable restoration of Wilfrid Stanford was unfolded to him.

"Now," said Harold Travers, when he had concluded, "even though you found Pauline, would you marry her for all the wealth of the Indies?"

"Yes," cried her noble young lover. "I would marry my darling though it were death to me at the next moment—ay, I would shield her with my very life, thanking Heaven for her love for one week, one day, or one hour, as providence might decree. Do you see those torches coming up the mountain-side? My comrades are waiting for me to lead in the search through the old deserted mine. Will you join me, Harold?"

"Yes," said Harold, huskily; and they shook hands in silence.

The mine in question was some half a mile distant, but they quickly traversed it, headed by the anxious lover.

"It is called the most dangerous mine for miles about," said one grimy old miner, adding, "Is there one among us who will risk his life to go down? A lighted torch taken into it might mean death by explosion."

"I have asked no one to go," said Denis, "until I have made the descent and reached the bottom."

Old men shook their heads.

"Only Heaven knows what will become of him," they whispered huskily. "He is taking his own life in his hands."

But Denis heeded not their appeals, their words of warning.

Suddenly there was a shout. In the red glare of the torch-lights an old man came up the rocky path.

"Hold!" he cried.

What was there in that voice that made the men's faces blanch, and their hearts leap to their mouths in great throbs?

"It is the ghost of Wilfrid Stanford!" cried one of them, falling on his knees with a terrified cry.

"No, no, my good fellow. I am Wilfrid Stanford in the flesh," he answered, advancing.

The words had scarcely left his lips were a shot rang out from the revolver of one of the men. It was whistled so closely by Mr. Stanford that it singed his snow-white hair.

A second and a third shot followed in quick succession.

The second, which was aimed at Denis, went wide of the mark; the third from the smoking revolver was buried deep in the heart of the miner who had dropped his torch, and held the smoking revolver in his hand.

"The game is up," he cried. "I have played for heavy stakes, and lost. With the appearance of Wilfrid Stanford, whom I thought dead, and—and the search to be instituted in the old mine, I might as well give up. I—I—"

With a demoniacal laugh he fell forward as he spoke. That horrible laugh was his last.

"It is 'Joy!'" they cried; and for a moment Denis was distracted from going down into the mine, but in that moment a great cry arose.

"The man was disguised!" cried the miners who beat over him.

A false mustache and wig fell off, and in the flaring light Denis saw Maurice Fairfax in the flesh, lying before him stone dead—shot through the heart by his own hand.

It is hard to tell whether it was this discovery or the sudden appearance of Wilfrid Stanford on the scene that created the greater excitement.

It was Denis who brought them to a sense of their errand there.

He himself covered the wicked, distorted features with his handkerchief.

"Come, followers," he said.

Silently they fastened the rope about his waist. A score or more shaking hands lowered him down into the dark depths. Then all was silent.

They uncoiled the rope further and further, with bated breath, as it was drawn from their hands by the hero whom they had lowered. Suddenly it became taut. The signal to be drawn up was to be a violent jerking of the rope; but none came.

"Perhaps he is suffocating," said one of the miners. "For Heaven's sake draw him up quickly!"

Strong men grasped the rope—bent to their task. With an ejaculation of horror, they drew up the end of the rope.

Where was brave Denis Conner? The knot at the end of the noose had broken.

They looked into each other's white faces. Who was there among them that dared to investigate?

Let us follow our brave hero, dear reader. He had scarcely proceeded a dozen rods when the knot slipped and the rope fell from about him.

But he did not heed it, he was so thunderstruck, so startled at a sight that met his gaze.

He found himself before the entrance of a cavern, from whose high dome a heavy lamp swung from silver chains.

By the aid of the light which it shed he saw a luxuriant apartment fairly covered with rugs and skins almost priceless. In the furthest corner, on a couch, lay a woman, with an attendant bending over her on one side, and on the other side was Pauline—ay, Pauline!

Ere the morning sun broke over the little village of Westboro', the startling secret that the mine held ran from lip to lip.

Pauline, the silver king's beautiful daughter, had been found alive and well in the discarded old shaft into which she had fallen. So the story went.

But the wonderful news did not end here.

In the old deserted mine was also found Pauline's mother, whom every one believed had committed suicide in Europe years before.

It appears that the poor, foolish young bride had been very jealous of her husband, handsome Wilfrid Stanford, and had invented the story of insanity running in her blood to see if it would cause him to leave her.

She had, without any cause, grown jealous of a beautiful society belle. The thought had grown upon her, that if she were to die he would marry the belle. She had invented the story of her death, and then quietly watched to see what the result would be. Her faithful maid followed her mistress, never forsaking her.

The misguided, foolishly jealous wife lived but a few miles distant from Wilfrid Stanford, and the maid always in disguise. Twice a year they stole, under cover of the night, to Westboro', and secreting themselves in the old mine,

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Headache,
Biliousness,
Constipation,
Sea Sickness.

INVALUABLE
FOR LADIES.

which was near Castle Royal, she would remain there until she caught sight of Pauline and her husband. Then she would go away again.

The meeting in the old mine between mother and daughter was affecting, as was also their discovery there by Denis Connor. The reuniting of the foolish, long-suffering wife and Wilfrid Stanford, the devoted husband, and Pauline, the silver king's beautiful daughter, was never forgotten by those who witnessed it.

Denis had gone silently back to the mouth of the mine, and brought them all down, Wilfrid Stanford among them. The day that followed was never forgotten in Westboro. The doors of grand old Castle Royal were thrown open by its master, and all the miners for miles around, with their wives and children, were bidden to a feast such as they had never sat down to before—a banquet fit for the gods, which they were never tired talking about in their after lives.

Wine flowed like water, and with many a glad hurrah they filled the bumpers, and drank long and deep and merrily to the health of the grand old silver king, his happy, tearful wife, beautiful Pauline, the honest, faithful maid; and last, but by no means least, they drank to the health of Denis Connor, whom all the miners fairly idolised.

One of the miners advanced the hope that by that time next year he would be the husband of Pauline, the silver king's lovely daughter. This toast was received with rousing cheers of delight—three cheers and a tiger—from every miner present.

Ere the year had expired, the marriage of Denis Connor and Pauline took place at Castle Royal. Bertie Howard and Norah were reunited, and live an ideal life in a beautiful home not far from Castle Royal, Bertie's mother living near them, while Denis's father and mother live in a delightful home down in the picturesque valley.

Harold Travers met, fell in love with, and married Pauline's friend, Ethel Hope.

The name of Maurice Fairfax is never mentioned in the village. The books which he had changed were soon righted, and Mr. Stanford again took possession of his magnificent fortune, which had more than doubled itself. The following year he was a happy grand-parent; and to perpetuate the grand old name, and please him as well, they called the boisterous youngster Wilfrid Denis Stanford Connor. And Norah, who was the proud mother of a little dark-eyed girl, called her Pauline. And happy as love and prosperity can make them, we will leave them, dear reader; for their many difficulties are over, and there is no more to tell of the life and love of Pauline, the silver king's daughter.

[THE END.]

FACETIA.

CRAYON: "Has Daube exhibited anything this year?" Van Buth: "Only his temper; his work was all rejected."

ETHEL: "Did you hear of the engagement of Jack and Penelope?" Harold: "Dear me! Then Jack has finally succeeded?" Ethel: "No; succumbed."

"I've been riding on the Chatham and Dover line for five years, and I've never offered a lady a seat." "Then you've never had any manners." "That isn't it. I've never had a seat."

Mrs. MASHEM: "My dog and I have been sitting for our photographs as 'Beauty and the Beast.'" Lord Lorsus (a bit of a fancier): "Yes; he certainly is a beauty, isn't he?"

"They have never spoken since they took part in private theatricals," said Miss Cayenne. "I see; professional jealousy." "Oh, dear no; something far worse. It's amateur jealousy."

Mrs. De RICH (listening to new prima donna at the opera): "Isn't she splendid?" Mr. De Rich (wealthy manufacturer, enthusiastically): "Just grand! She's worthy of a place alongside of Patti in my soap advertisements."

MRS. CAUSTIC: "John, my dear, do you know you are a very clever man—very?" Mr. Caustic (surprised): "Thank you, my dear; but why do you think so specially?" "Because you have managed so that I am probably the only one who knows what a fool you really are."

MISS MEADOWSWEET: "Excuse my ignorance; but ought I to call you Mr. Squills or Doctor Squilla?" The Doctor: "Oh, call me anything you like. Some of my friends call me an old fool!" Miss Meadowsweet: "Ah, but that is only people who know you intimately!"

MRS. GABB (hostess): "Your little son does not appear to have much appetite." Mrs. Gabb: "No, he is very delicate." Mrs. Gabb: "Can't you think of anything you would like, my little man?" Little Man: "No, m'm. You see, mom made me eat a hell lot before we started, so I wouldn't make a pig of myself."

One of the surgeons of a hospital asked an Irish help which he considered the most dangerous of the many cases then in the hospital. "That, sir," said Patrick, as he pointed to a case of surgical instruments.

TIME: after dinner. Scene: dessert. Little Beauty, seated by her mother, discourses affably with a gentleman who is peeling an apple for her. Gentleman: "If I send you a doll, should it have golden hair, like yours?" Little Beauty: "Oh, no. The next doll I want must have hair like mamma—to take on and off."

APPLICANT: "I am an ex-convict, sir, but I want to lead an honest life. I know you by reputation, and I thought you might help me." Eminent Author: "What were you in prison for?" Applicant: "Forgery." Eminent Author: "Good! You're the very man I want. You can write autographs for me."



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SOCIETY.

HER MAJESTY has conferred the decoration of the Royal Red Cross upon the Queen of Greece and upon Princess Sophie, Crown Princess of Greece, Duchess of Sparta.

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG has passed the final re-examination of the St. John Ambulance Association and received the gold medal.

THE Duke and Duchess of York will reside at Sandringham until the second week in February, when they are probably to go to Copenhagen for about three weeks.

THE Queen will remain at Osborne for about two months. Her Majesty will then return to Windsor for a short time before going to the South of France, which she will probably reach about the second week in April, although nothing is yet decided finally in regard to this.

THE Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha go to Gotha after Christmas, and hold Court there for a month, and in February they will go to the South. The state of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha's health is not satisfactory. He was unwell almost the whole of the time he was in England, but is at present somewhat better.

BEXFORD his departure from England, the King of Siam told little Prince Eddy of Wales that he hoped he would some day visit him in Siam, to which invitation the Prince, whose summers only number three, gravely replied that he had every intention of doing so.

NOTHING has yet been definitely done or settled as to the Queen's Continental trip next spring. Her Majesty would like best to go either to North Italy or to some place on the Eastern Riviera between Genoa and Spezia, if a suitable residence could be procured. It will probably end in the Queen going again to Cluny if certain difficulties can be overcome, and her Majesty's courier is now staying at Nice.

WHEN the young Duke of Albany returns to school, the Duchess of Albany and Princess Alice will proceed to Cannes for a stay of about two months at the Villa Nevada. The only brother of the Duchess, the reigning Prince of Waldeck-Pyrmont, and his wife (who is a daughter of Prince William of Schaumburg-Lippe and a sister of the Queen of Wurtemberg), intend to spend a few weeks on the Riviera in the early part of the spring.

THE German Emperor, who has always been a great smoker, has been lately advised to leave off smoking the very strong Havana cigars which were his favourites, as he was suffering very much from insomnia. Kaiser Wilhelm now smokes a very mild Dutch cigar, and has derived great benefit from the change. His Majesty is also a great smoker of Egyptian cigarettes, for which he pays the modest price of four shillings a hundred.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales arrived at Chatsworth on Tuesday, January 4th, accompanied by Princess Victoria and Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark, and will be the guests of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire until Saturday the 8th, when they are to return to Sandringham. There will be shooting on two days in the home preserves in and around Chatsworth Park, and one day will be devoted to visiting Haddon Hall. The principal front of Chatsworth House, and the fountains on the terrace, the great cascade in the French Garden, and the grand conservatory will all be illuminated on each night of the Royal visit. There are to be private theatricals during the week, and the theatre has been redecorated and lighted by electricity. The Prince and Princess occupy the State apartments on the South side of the house, which are entered from the Sketch gallery. These are the rooms which the Queen and Prince Albert occupied when they visited Chatsworth in December, 1843, the Duke of Devonshire receiving them at Chesterfield with a coach-and-six and eight outriders. The Prince and Princess of Wales were the guests of the late Duke at Chatsworth about twenty-two years ago, when Lady Louisa Egerton officiated as hostess.

STATISTICS.

THE normal temperature of fish is seventy-seven degrees.

THE Scilly group contains about forty islands, only five of them being inhabited.

A NUTMEG TREE of the largest size will produce no more than five pounds of nutmegs.

ABOUT 100,000 tons of carbon are annually sent up by the London chimneys in the form of smoke.

There is enough salt in the sea to cover 7,000,000 square miles of land with a layer one mile in thickness.

THE population of Palestine is increasing rapidly. Ten years ago there were only 15,000 residents in Jaffa; to-day there are nearly 50,000.

GEMS.

HE is happy whose circumstances suit his temper; but he is more excellent who can suit his temper to any circumstance.

NEVER forget what a man has said to you when he was angry. If he has charged you with anything, you had better look it up.

TO fulfil the law of womanhood one need not be a mother, but only to be motherly; one need not be a wife, but only to be loyal to the unselfish principle of wifehood.

HUMAN strength can be earned through human energy. It is not always a gift which Nature showers upon some and denies to others, but it is often a gradual development in the progression in accordance with the active efforts and earnest struggles which he puts forth day by day.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SQUASH CAKES.—One pint bowl of sifted squash, two ounces of butter, one teaspoonful of baking powder, half a teaspoonful of salt, flour enough to roll out and cut with a biscuit cutter. Cook on a griddle.

FROSTED APPLES.—Stew some apples until the skins can be taken off easily. As each apple is peeled, dip it into clarified butter, and cover with granulated sugar. Bake in a slow oven till they sparkle.

PRUNE MERINGUE.—One-half pound of prunes boiled soft and put through a sieve. Do not use the water the prunes were boiled in. One cup of granulated sugar. The whites of six eggs beaten light and add to the prunes. Bake one-half hour in a moderate oven. Serve with whipped cream, and season with vanilla. Serve hot.

A DELICIOUS DUMPLIN.—Make a sponge cake. Stew some figs; pull the figs apart; cover with cold water and stand aside over night. Next morning bring them slowly to boiling point. Turn out to cool. Cut the sponge cake in squares, put a layer of the figs on each square, and over the put some whipped cream. This is delicious.

FRICASSEED TRIPPE WITH OYSTERS.—Cut a pound of tripe in narrow strips, put a small cup of water or milk to it, add a bit of butter the size of an egg, dredge in a large teaspoonful of flour, or work it with the butter; season with pepper and salt; let it simmer gently for half an hour; serve hot. Put oysters in five minutes before dishing up.

CHINESE RAGOUT.—Chop one pint of cold cooked mutton; put in a stewing-pan and add two tablespoonsfuls of butter, a half-pint of water, one small onion chopped, half pint of green peas, or half of a can, a small head of a salad torn in small pieces, a teaspoonful of salt and a quarter of a teaspoonful of pepper. Cover and cook slowly for one hour. When done, dish and serve with a border of boiled rice.

MISCELLANEOUS.

BOTTLES now are being made of paper. They are for use particularly on shipboard, where heavy weather works havoc among glass receptacles.

A JAPANESE publisher has commenced the issue of a periodical with articles in eight different languages—English, German, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

NEWFOUNDLAND is remarkable for its lakes and pools. They are of all sizes, shapes, and depths, from tiny pools to immense sheets of water over fifty miles in length.

THE most extraordinary plant known is the "travelling plant," which has a root formed of knots, by which it annually advances about an inch from the place where it was first rooted.

A LIGHTHOUSE of bamboo has been built in Japan. It is said to have greater power of resisting the waves than any other kind of wood, and does not rot like ordinary wood.

A MICROSCOPIC examination of mother-of-pearl shows that the prismatic colours of the shell come from the number of very fine lines closely put together. A wax cast of the shell will yield the same prismatic colours.

A DRESDEN firm has adapted a felt hat cutting machine to do the same work in straw hats, thereby putting aside the cut by handcraft. With the machine one woman may cut more than one thousand hats in one day.

In Japan, instead of "christening" a vessel about to be launched, a large cage full of birds is hung over the prow. Directly the ship is afloat the birds are released, the idea being that the birds in this way welcome the ship as she begins her life.

EVERYTHING in any way connected with Alaska and the Klondyke is of special interest at present, and among other items the foot of the reindeer deserves particular mention. The forefoot of the horse to a great extent determines its value, as upon this portion of its anatomy its speed and endurance depend. The foot of the reindeer is most peculiar in construction. It is cloven through the middle and each half curves upward in front. They are slightly elongated and capable of a considerable amount of expansion. When placed on an irregular surface, which is difficult to traverse, the animal contracts them into a sort of claw, by which a firm hold is secured. When moving rapidly the two portions of the foot, as it is lifting, strike together, the hoofs making a continuous clattering noise, which may be heard at a considerable distance. It is this peculiarity of the foot that makes the reindeer so sure-footed and so valuable in that rocky and uneven country, where almost any other animal would prove a failure as a beast of burden.

EVERYONE is aware of the fact that many plants fold up their petals or close up their leaves on the approach of darkness. The difference in the appearance of plants under such circumstances is remarkable. Scientists tell us that sleep in quite as necessary to plants as to animals, or at least periods of repose during which the ravelled thread of exertion may be knotted up. A Norwegian experimenter was led to investigate the sleep of plants and to find out how much repose and what sort was most necessary for their well being. He subjected bulbs and twigs to the vapour of chloroform, with the result that the plants showed the most remarkable subsequent developments. If it be true that chloroform takes the place of natural sleep in plants, the relation between plant and animal life in this particular must be very unlike. Sleep is supposed to be a gradual restorer. An anaesthetic produces a state simulating death. If, as medical science tells us, a very high grade of recuperative power is an evidence of great vitality as its absence is a mark of deterioration, is it proper to conclude that the temporary trance of bulbs and plants caused by chloroform may indicate that their vitality is far in advance of that of the human family?



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to do the washing when

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is used; it does nearly all the work itself. Just rub a little on the clothes, roll them up and put them back in the water. Then when you take them out you will see that

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LAL.—Ask your bookseller.

R. V.—You cannot sell the things.

KIRK.—There are several places so called.

M. W.—We do not assist "competitions."

H. E.—No recruits are taken over twenty-five years of age.

INQUIRER.—The description would occupy more space than we could spare.

OLD READER.—The first step is to employ a solicitor to demand the goods.

ANTRIE.—The dressmaker is entitled to retain the dress until her work is paid for.

P. M.—Lord Salisbury is paid as Foreign Secretary, but not as Prime Minister.

J. B.—The answer must be found in the rules of the society, not in statute law; you must write to secretary.

T. H.—Conduct some member of the profession. The instructions you request would occupy a column or more.

Puzzler.—The name of the town of Derby is pronounced as spelt. The title and the race are pronounced "Derby."

A. AND M.—If you are under age your parents can give notice of objection to the clergyman who intends to perform the marriage.

SLAYER.—The general rule is that a weekly employment, with wages paid weekly, can be terminated by a week's notice.

UNHAPPY BISH.—Just wait a while, be as good and as sensible as possible, and his royal highness will undoubtedly declare his intentions at no very distant day.

LAWA.—We could not say without inspection; some sera will bear nothing, and when once stiff they are done for; others, if worn in a couple of showers of rain, will get all right.

R. P.—A husband must be guilty of desertion or neglect to support his family, or aggravated assault, or persistent cruelty, to enable his wife to obtain a separation order.

TEQUILER.—Persons below the middle height, robust, with large hands and short, thick necks, are generally reckoned as apoplectic subjects; but apoplexy is, in fact, confined to no particular conformation of body.

NUT BROWN MAID.—The giving or receiving a ring does not necessarily imply an "engagement" between the donor and the recipient. There must be other circumstances to form a binding engagement.

BETHNA.—Soak it first in a cold, hard water. Fill a tub with spring water and throw the flannel in, when it sinks to the bottom, take it out and hang it up to dry and drain without any squeezing. It does not lose the appearance of new flannel when dry.

HINTS.

Two thirsty travellers chanced one day to meet
Where a spring bubbled from the burning sand—
One drank out of the hollow of his hand,
And found the water very cool and sweet.

The other waited for a smith to beat
And fashion for his use a golden cup,
And while he waited, fainting in the heat,
The sunshine came and drank the fountain up;

In a green field two little flowers there were,
And both were fair in th' face and tender-eyed :
One took the light and dew that heaven supplied,
And all the summer gusts were sweet with her :

The other, to her nature false, damned
That she had any need of sun and dew,
And hung her silly head, and sickly laid,
And fading and faded, all untimely died.

A vine o' th' bough, that had been early wed
To a tall peach, conceiving that he hit
Her chores from the world, unwisely did
Out of his arms, and vainly chafing, said :

" This fellow is an enemy of mine,
And dwells me with his shade"—she would not see
That she was made a vine, and not a tree,
And that a tree is greater than a vine.

FOLLIES.—You had better write to Registrar-General's Office, Somerset House, London, making application Birth Department, and asking whether the birth you are interested in has been entered; if so, request extract certificate to be sent; you must forward 4d. 7d. with the letter.

JEWELL.—First get all of the grease that will come out of the clothes by laying a piece of brown or blotting paper upon the stain, then putting a very hot iron on that, continuing the process till the paper comes away unspotted, then rub the cloth either with some benzine oil, or with water containing a little oxalic acid.

M. O.—Take a spoonful of alum and two of saltpetre; crush thoroughly with a smoothing-iron or rolling with a bottle; sprinkle the powder on the flesh side of the skin, put two flesh sides together, fold up as dry as possible, and hang in a dry place; in two or three days take the skin down, and scrape it with a blunt knife until clean and supple; the process is then complete.

L. L.—There are several ways. One of the simplest is to pick the grapes from the stems, cook them until they will crush with a spoon. Then put them in a cheese-cloth bag and drain out the juice. Add a little sugar, just enough to kill the sharpness. Bring it to a boil, heat the bottles and corks and bottle immediately. When the bottles are cool seal them with wax, then cover with plaster of Paris. Keep in a cool place.

ECONOMICAL.—Cheap typewriters are not especially profitable investments even for the use of children. It is much better to get a good one, as although the cost is something more at the outset, it is less in the long run on account of its greater durability and the certainty of its remaining in order. There are so many typewriters, and each claims so many points of superiority, that it would be impossible to select one that would be best of all.

BEST.—The bridegroom and his best man should be in the church, waiting first, then the bridesmaids arrive, then the bride. The bride takes the arm of her father, or his representative, and enter the church and walk direct to the altar. Here the bridesmaids stand near and the bridegroom takes his place, but you would have nothing to do with that, as this arrangement of all that takes place in the church should be conducted by the clerk, or clergyman's assistant.

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